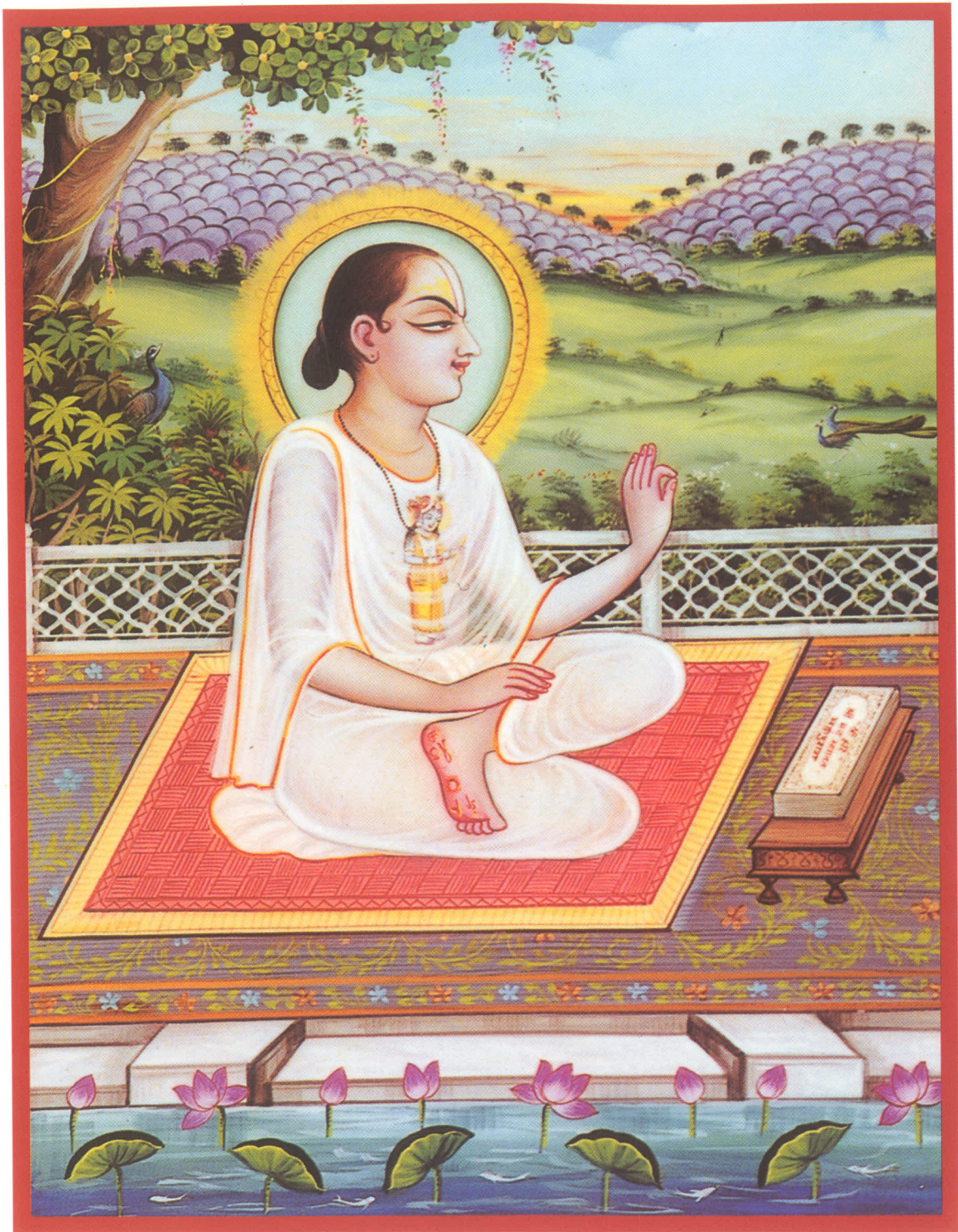


PRABHUCHARAN GUSAINJI SHRI VITTHALNATHJI



Inspired by :
Shri Nikunjalata Betiji

Published by :
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Jagadguru Shrimad Vallabhacharyaji



**Shri Gopinath Prabhucharan - the elder son of
Shri Vallabhacharya - The first acharya after him
who contributed greatly to Pushti Marg.**

PRABHUCHARAN GUSAINJI SHRI VITTHALNATHJI

पुष्टि साहित्य पुस्तकालय
कांदीवली (वेस्ट)
C/o. सुरेन्द्र जमनादास शाह
M : 9833272383,
9320787642

Inspired By

Shri Nikunjalata Betiji

Written by

Smt. Neeta Rajesh Mehta

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Mumbai - 400026. India.
Te.: 367 8814.

C/o Surendrabhai Mehta
604, Makerchambers V
Nariman Point
Mumbai - 400021. India.

Tel.: (Off) 283 5295
287 5534
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PRABHUCCHARAN GUSAINJI SHRI VITTHALANATHJI

PREFACE

It is with great love and devotion at the feet of **Prabhucharan Shri Vitthalnathji** that I present this book which encases his life and divinity. It has always been my desire to present a book on his life, as he has held a special place of reverence in my heart. A lot has been written about him, by scholars and propagators of Pushti Marg in the form of prose and poetry over a period of many years but all of this literature has been in languages other than English. The present times have made a special demand for such literature which can be widely read and understood by people around the world also I especially present this work in English for the younger generation the children and for people who are more acquainted with English than any other language.

In presenting a book on Shri Vitthalnathji another purpose has also been served as I travel around the world intermingling with Vaishnavas every where, I have realized that people are not aware of the lives and divine characters of our Gurus and founders of Pushti Marg, and through books like these I wish to convey to them the greatness of our divine Gurus.

Shri Vitthalnathji was the second son of Shri Vallabhacharyaji and it was in his strong and able hands that the leadership of Pushti Marg had come. Shri Vallabh founded Pushti Marg, but it was he Shri Vitthalnathji who strengthened and spread its greatness around the country. He like Shri Vallabhacharyaji who imbibed the most scientific and beautiful form of Sewa in Krishna Bhakti and took it to its glorious heights as we know it to be today. Even the present day Goswamis' the descendants of Shri Vallabhacharyaji are the descendants of the lineage of his illustrious son Shri Vitthalnathji.

I also have a special pleasure in presenting this book as it is written by an author who belongs to the present generation **Shrimati Neeta Mehta** an ardent lover of Shrinathji, a present day Vaishnav and has penned this book which is a

labour of that love. Like many others, I met her at one of the many functions when she approached me with her beautiful lyrical poems composed for Shrinathji. I found in her compositions a rare combinations of devotion and beauty of words and it was then that I conveyed to her the idea of penning this book in English. Having done her graduation in English, she is a lawyer who now wishes to advocate the principles of Pushti Marg. With great love for Shrinathji and Shri Mahaprabhuji and strong faith in the principles of Pushti Marg, she has written this book, a field to tally new for her. I take great pride in presenting her first prosaic work in Pushti literature. She has also co-written the book on Shri Vallabhacharyaji. With her deep sense of respect for me and her complete understanding of the subject she has given in a simple and lucid form, a book, the subject of which is closest to my heart. The simplicity of this book itself will make it more readable by the people of all ages.

My thankful acknowledgements to **Shri Manojbhai Mehta** who is a true Vaishnav, who has always remained behind the scenes and silently worked for Pushti Marg. He has contributed in every possible way for the publication of this book and the one on Jagad Guru Shrimad Vallabhacharya. His contribution towards every field of Pushti Marg is noteworthy and I bless him for helping me in every way for the publication of this book.

I also bless **Shri Anilbhai Goswami** for the beautiful Graphics of this book.

I also bless **Shri Kanubhai Motilal** and his entire family who are engaged in various charitable works and have made a note worthy financial contribution towards the publication of this work.

I hope this book is read and appreciated in every Vaishnav home so that the lives of our divine Gurus be understood and known every where.

Nikunjilata Betiji

PRABHUCCHARAN GUSAINJI SHRI VITTHALNATHJI

INTRODUCTION

It gives me immense pleasure and a keen sense of satisfaction to present this work on Prabhucharan Shri Vitthalnathji the second son of Shrimad Vallabhacharyaji. As the divine Guru of Pushti Marg, Shri Vitthalnathji stands out as a clear personification of divinity and grace. Not only a great leader and a propagator of Pushti Marg, he is regarded to be one of those pillars of the faith on whom the whole sect is strengthened and built. While Shri Vallabhacharyaji established the Pushti faith, it was entirely the perseverance and labour of his son, Shri Vitthalnathji that nurtured and strengthened the sect and handed it over to the future generations.

A great person of divine traits, he was a learned scholar, a considerate and compassionate human being, a man of vision, an artist a poet and an administrator all in one. In fact, it was his many faceted personality that attracted people towards him and made them want to be his followers and lead a life of devotion and purity.

Always immersed in the thought of Shri Krishna, he found fulfillment in spreading the bliss of his bhakti all around and could thus convert thousands towards Shree Krishna and we can therefore say that his very soul was Shri Krishna Himself. For him to awaken the love of God in thousands of hearts was not just a mission, it was a way of life and this aspect of his personality cannot in any way be alienated from his existence.

So divine was his personality that people who came in contact with him, shed their vices and evil characters and changed their mode of life for a better purpose. By his discourses, he made thieves give up stealing, drug addicts give up on drugs. He encouraged business men to be more honest in their dealings. He never discouraged real devotion from the lowest of the persons, for he never discriminated between castes, class or sex. For him every person was the creation of the same Poorna Purshottam Shri Krishna. He never believed in the prevalent superstitions of astrology as far as seva was concerned and also believed that the purest of all

wealth should be used for the purposes of seva.

Amongst the beings graced by him, not only were there humans, but even ghouls, birds, beasts etc; for his compassion was equal for all of God's creation. He always encouraged Ahimsa and taught his followers that to kill even for their living was wrong and like Shri Krishna had a great love for cows. In him we get to see the best of every aspect of Hindu Vedic religion and we often hear Pushti followers addressing him as 'Param Dayal' 'Mahapatit Paavan' Kripa Nidhi' 'Geet Sangeet Sagar', etc.

His literary works, his artistry, his organising of the seva of according to the principles of Pushti Marg are but a few of his divine achievements, for he was not born just to achieve sublime goals but for a very divine mission of strengthening Pushti Marg and spreading Krishna Bhakti. While his father's personality commanded reverence from all, we find Shri Vitthalnathji's personality awe-inspiring, the one that is unfathomable like the depths of the ocean. While the father's personality was simplistic, Shri Vitthalnathji's approach was more kingly and royal and yet, he like his father was a pure ascetic at heart. A person who never required any formal renunciation as every thing in and around him was already surrendered at the feet of the Lord.

Shri Vallabhcharya's life was the result of various wishes of Shri Krishna at all times. Shri Vitthalnathji's life in a broad perspective was a vivid vista of experiences of Shri Krishna's presence. Chronologically his earthly life of seventy years (1572-1642) can be broadly divided into five segments of fourteen years each i.e.

1. 1572-1587 years under the strong influence and training of Shri Vallabhacharyaji his divine father.
 2. 1587 - 1600 under the leadership of Shri Gopinathji his elder brother.
 3. 1601 - 1614 under the guidance of Pushti greats like Damodardas Harsani which awakened in him the essence of the beauty of Pushti Bhakti.
-

4. 1615 - 1628 his stay in Vraj and his experiences of pangs of separation from Shrinathji and which brought out the astute Krishna Bhakti in him.

5. 1628 - 1642 the last phase of his life where he experienced total bliss of the presence of his beloved Lord in and around him at all times a total fulfilment of his entire life spent as a devotee.

Yet For the proper understanding of the various aspects of his character we do not keep to the strict chronology of his life in this book. To understand Shri Vitthalnathji, his grace, his devotion and his skillful organising power we have to therefore refer to the various little incidents and major happenings in his lifetime which by themselves throw great light on his character. Other works of Pushti Marg, like the story of 252 Vaishnav devotees throw a lot of light on his life through the life of his followers as they were the living examples of the power, the godliness and the teachings of Shri Vitthalnathji.

A lot of great literature on Shri Vitthalnathji has revealed a lot about his life, a simple attempt is made here, to understand the major dimensions of his life for readers of all ages, an attempt to reveal the qualities and characteristics in a human whose godliness was to the extent of awakening and inspiring divinity in others. While we are in no position to judge his divinity to the fullest, we as humans can take inspiration from his life and strive to better our lives based on his teachings alone, for though belonging to Pushti Marg and Shri Vitthalnathji's teaching are as universal in their appeal as those of Shrimad Bhagvad Gita itself and this alone recounts for his greatness as a true Guru and Acharya.

I feel greatly honoured by the graces of Shrinathji which have inspired me to attempt to write and describe the life of Shri Vitthalnathji who was very dear to Him. Shri Vitthalnathji's divinity and grace as the great guru of every Pushti Vaishnav has given me the strength to complete this work. For any misgivings in this work, I can only pray at his feet as our guru and at the feet of Shrinathji my beloved lord to be forgiven.

I also thank H.H. Shri Nikunjilata Betiji - (one of the more illustrious leader

of Pushti Marg in present times, as a proud descendent of Shri Vallabhacharyaji and Shri Vitthalnathji themselves) for giving me this opportunity to write this book, the subject of which is dear to her heart and therefore the encouragement, the help and guidance which she has given me shall always find me indebted towards her. For all the reasons of my heart she is my guru and the confidence which she has in me and the love she has showered on me are tremendous source of strength to me. It is to this reservoir in of inspiration and guidance to which I Shall always be indebted.

With my heart and soul I dedicate this book, every word of it at the feet of Shrinathji from whom I draw my very existence.

Neeta Rajesh Mehta

PROLOGUE

The saga of Shri Vitthalnathji begins as early as the fourteenth and fifteenth also century on the banks of river Krishna in the small town of Kankarvad. For in this little village in Andhra Pradesh, in Southern India, lived the ancestors of Shri Vitthalnathji. Yagna Narayan Bhatt the earliest ancestor of Shri Vitthal was a learned, holy Velandu Brahmin, who performed 32 Som a Yagnas during which, Lord Krishna himself appeared and blessed him saying that He would incarnate in their family when his descendants would complete 100 such yagnas. Yagna Narayan Bhatt performed 32 such Yagnas. After him his son Gangadhasr Bhatt performed 28 Som Yagnas. Gangadhar Bhatt's son Ganapati Bhatt performed 30 Yagnas. His son Balam Bhatt or Vallabh Bhatt performed 5 yagnas.

Balam Bhatt had two sons Janardan Bhatt and Laxman Bhatt, Laxman Bhatt married two daughters of a Pandit Susharma of Kashi and performed 5 Som yagnas to complete the 100 Yagnas. It was to his second wife Illamagaru that Shrimad Vallabhacharya was born. As promised to Yagna Narayan Bhatt the Lord had incarnated Himself in the divine form of Shri Vallabh.

Shri Vallabh at the very tender age of 10 began his divine mission and undertook his first journey around the country. He undertook three such journeys across the country to spread his newly founded Pushti Marg, which shows the ways and discipline of Krishna Bhakti.

It was during his second journey that Shri Vallabh arrived at Pandharpur and this changed the course of his divine life.



Celebration of birth of Shri Vitthalnathji

PRABHUCCHARAN GUSAINJI SHRI VITTHALNATHJI

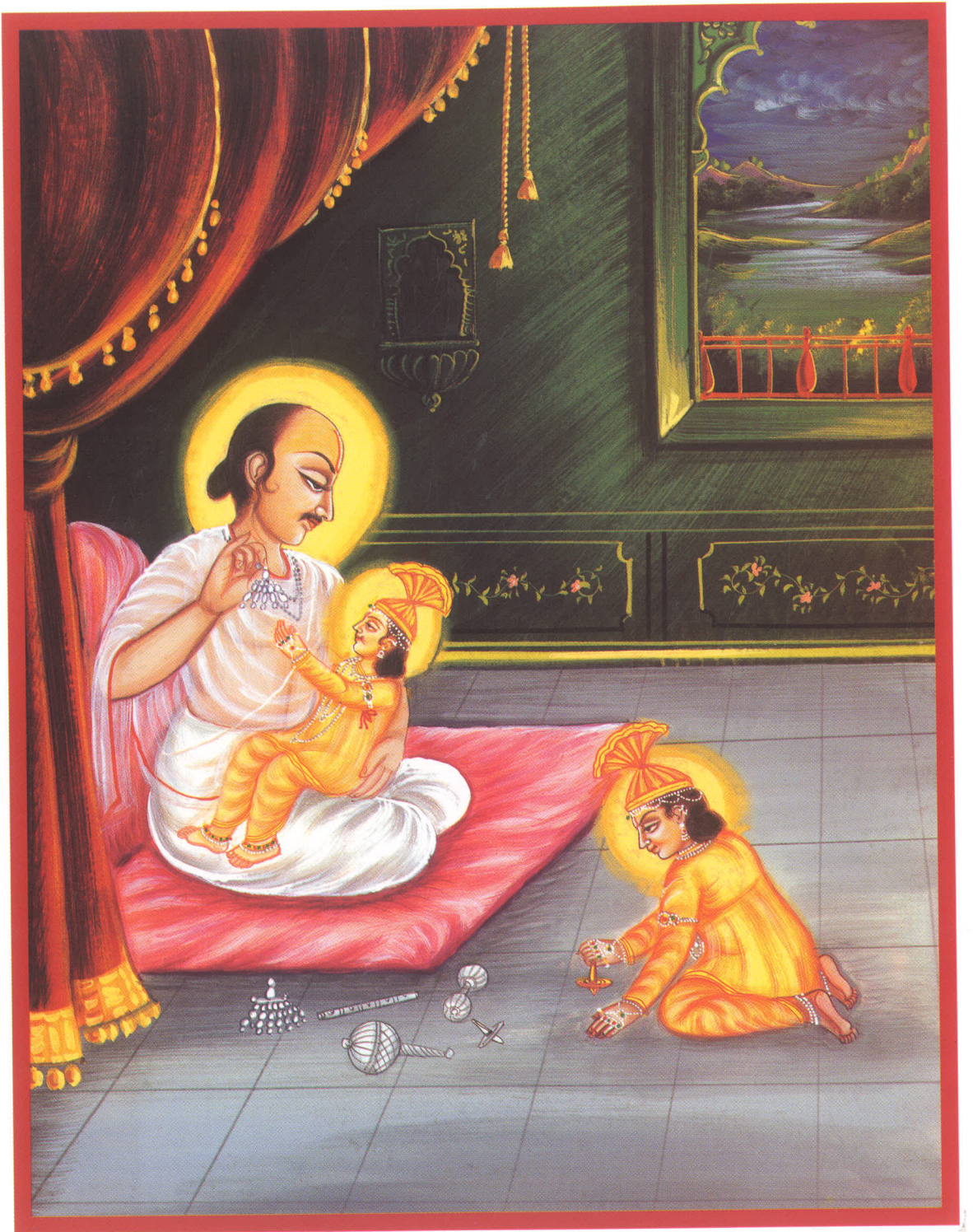
CHAPTER I

BIRTH AND EARLY DAYS

Pandharpur, on the banks of river Bheemrathi in Maharashtra is easily one of the most recognized holy cities of India, and is famous for its Vithoba Temple, 'Vithoba' or Vitthalnathji, is that form of Shri Krishna who had come to bless and grace is favourite devotee Pundalik, a poor boy who lived in this small town. When the Lord appeared before him, Pundalik was busy serving his old parents and did not get up to receive the Lord. Instead, he passed on brick to the Lord and asked him to wait till he was free from his parental duties. The Lord, ever pleased with his devotee, patiently waited for Pundalik, standing on the brick with both his hands resting on his waist. This, then is the form of Shri Vitthalnathji as we see him in the temple of Pandharpur.

Shri Vallabhacharyaji on his second tour to south India arrived in this town of Pandharpur to pay his respects to the Lord, along with his devotees. He encamped on the outskirts of this town in the wilderness of the banks of the river. He paid his respects to Shri Vithoba and worshipped Him, and after meeting with the people of Pandharpur and the various devotees in the Vithoba Temple he returned to the place where they had encamped. There he decided to recite Srimad Bhagvat and at that time Shri Vithoba himself appeared before him. On seeing Shri Vithoba approaching, he rose to receive the Lord and both embraced each other with a lot of affection, offering him a seat, he asked Shri Vithoba the reason for gracing him in so much privacy.

Shri Vithoba asked Shri Vallabh to shun his Bramacharyashram (the age of celibate vows) and accept Grishashashram (Householder's life) Since the Lord Himself wished to incarnate Himself as his son, so that the family lineage of Shri Vallabh would continue the work of spreading Krishna Bhakti. Shri Vallabh heard



**Shri Gopinathji and Shri Vitthalnathji
playing with Shri Mahaprabhuji**

every word spoken by the Lord with total devotion and rapt attention, after this the Lord disappeared and Shri Vallabh sat thinking and contemplating the words spoken by him. Shortly after this incident, Shri Vallabhacharyaji resumed his second tour and returned to Kashi (Banaras) He was 25 years old then. In Kashi a Brahmin of Shri Vallabh's caste, by the name of Devan Bhatt approached him, and requested him to accept his daughter Malakshmi's hand in marriage as he had been ordered to do so by Shri Vitthalnathji (of Pandharpur) in his dreams.

Shri Vallabh himself was reminded of the conversation he had in Pandharpur and accepted Devan Bhatt's proposal, but also requested him to approach the whole issue traditionally by talking to the elders of his family. Soon Shri Vallabhacharyaji's wedding was arranged by his uncle and his mother and a grand celebration took place in Kashi itself. Amidst, followers and family members the wedding took place in a traditional way with great fanfare, and Shri Vallabh accepted a householder's way of life.

Shri Vallabhacharyaji then embarked upon his third pilgrimage, touring every corner of India. Thereafter, on returning he decided to live in a small town of Adel on (place near Allahabad - U.P.) the banks of river Yamuna and along with the members of his family made Adel his family residence. Here in Adel in the year 1567 was born his elder son Shri. Gopinathji. Thereafter Shri Vallabhacharyaji along with his wife visited Kashi. Where he was told that there was a place by the name of Charnadri (Charnat) which was better (place near kashi) some time at the request of king Virbhadr of Kashi in the year 1572 Shri Vallabhacharyaji arrived in Charnat and along with his family took up residence in Charnat. Once, it so happened in the early hours of the morning a brahmin arrived in Charnat looking out for Shri Vallabhacharyaji. On approaching him narrated that on the banks of River Ganga, he was living a secluded life and daily recited Srimad Bhagwad; when one day, while bathing in the river he came across a beautiful (Idol) of the Lord who ordered him to Worship Him for sometime and then take him to wherever he ordered him to. After sometime the Lord had ordered the Brahmin to take him to Shri Vallabhacharyaji and he had therefore come to him to give him that Swarup* of the Lord.

* Swarup - A Form of Shri Krishna either made in metal or stone Lord Vitthalnathji of Pandharpur, Maharashtra had come to him in his dream on the Vraj swami

It was on the same day that Shri Vallabhacharyaji was conveyed the good news that another son was born into his house. Shri Vallabhacharyaji was evercome with joy and love. (The Swaroop of Shri Vitthalnathji had come to him on the very same day that the Lord had incarnated Himself as his son). Therefore to commemorate. (The divine orders of the Lord Vitthalnathji he named is divine son Vitthalnath.)

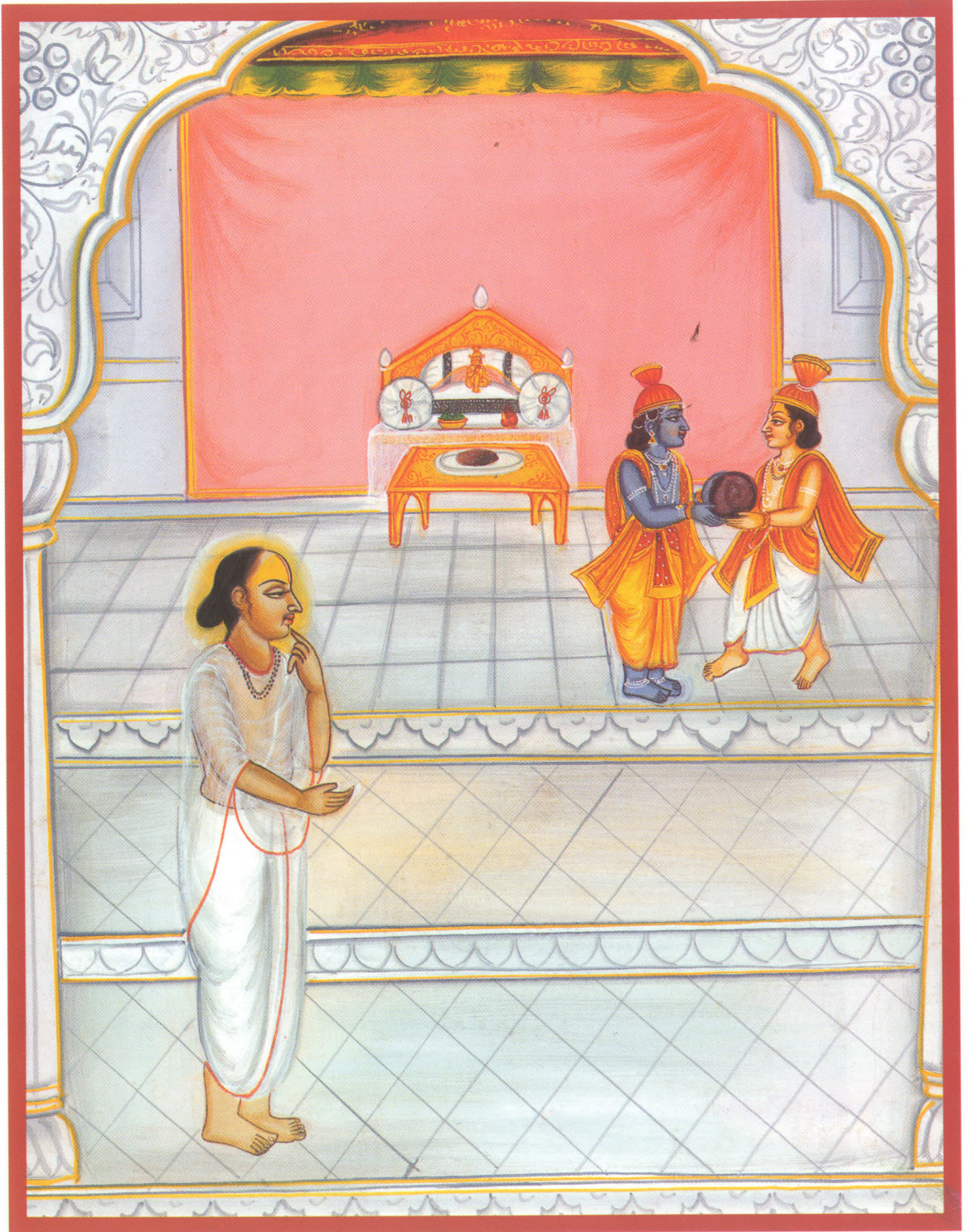
The birth of this divine child was celebrated with great grandeur and all vedic rituals were duly performed by Shri Vallabh.

Shri Vitthalnath or Shree Vitthalesh as he was called, like his father was divinity personified. He was the Lord incarnate, who had come to the family of Shri Vallabh to strengthen Bhakti Marg and take it to its great glory. The foundation of Nirguna Bhakti or selfless devotion of Shri Krishna was laid by Shri Vallabh and was strengthened and nurtured with great love by the divine capabilities and forthright thought process of Shri Vitthal (Shri Vitthalanthji). He was born on the 9th day of the dark half of the month of Margshirsh in the year 1572 in the quaint little town of Charnat, beautiful in its surroundings with picturesque wilderness all around it. The day had the auspicious settings of an astrologically perfect time for a divine birth.

Long before his birth, the proud parents had received signals signifying the fact the the child about to be born was divine and coming with a divine mission. Shri Vallabhacharyaji had this feeling that Shri Krishna was about to be reborn into his houshold and the faces of both parents radiated with an aura of divine it. Their devotion and love for Shri Krishna increased manifold as also their ecstasy in anticipation of some divine happening. It was to such parents that Shri Vitthalnathji was born. People from distant corners of the land came to have a glimpse of this child also the celestial beings from above. All happily revelled in grand celebrations that took place to celebrate this auspicious and happy event. Everyone who came to celebrate this occasion could not help but admire the lovely face and the from of Shri Vitthalnathji the radiant face , the dark curls of hair and eyes like two petals of lotus flowers.

Shri Vallabhacharyaji gave the child the divine eight syllable mantra* and

* Shri Krishna Sharanam Mantra : The Astakshar Mantra.



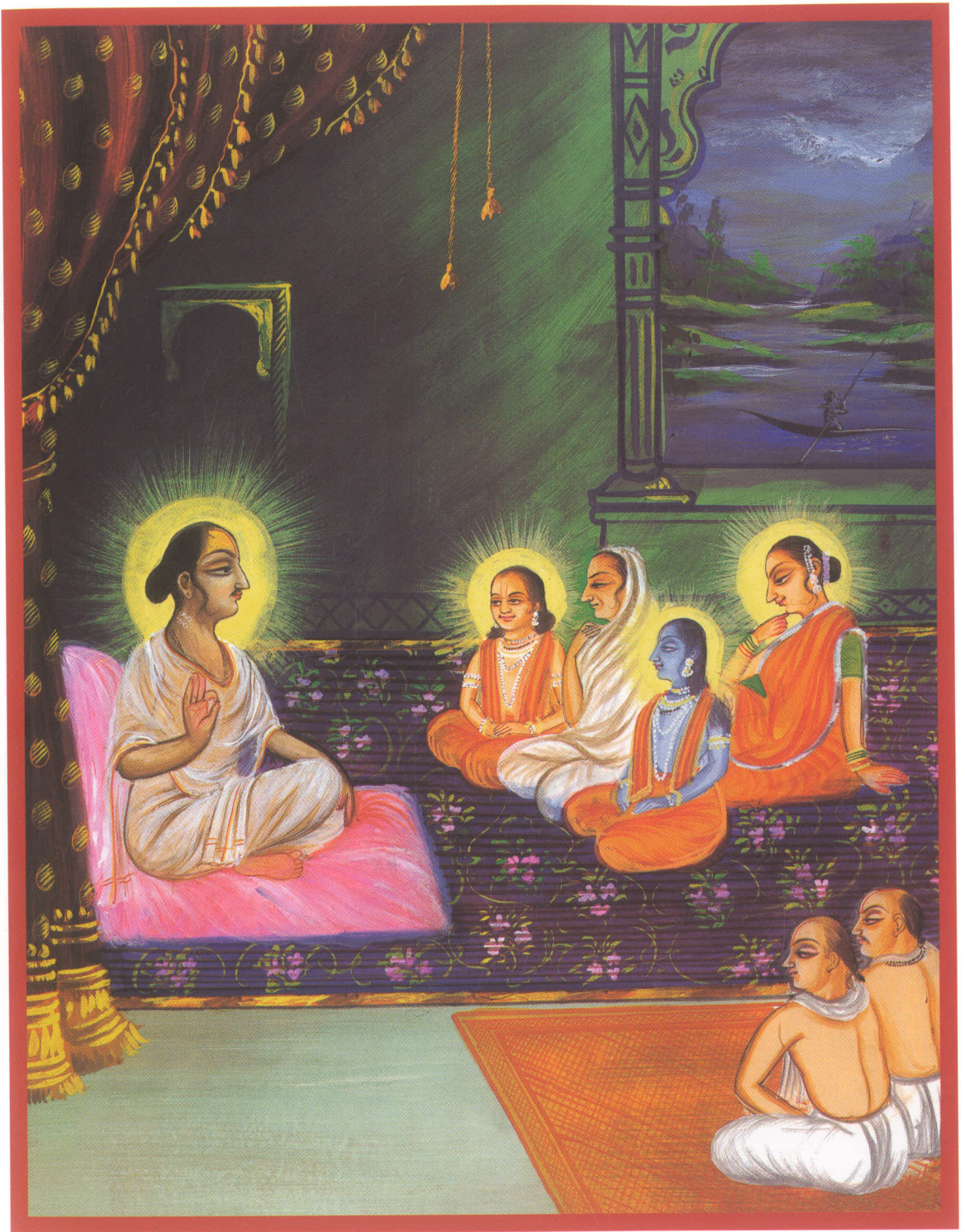
Sharing the sweet with Shri Balkrishnaji

put a tulsi mala in his tiny neck on the eleventh day. Thereafter the various ceremonies according to the Vedic religion were performed. Major part of his childhood was spent in Adel and Charnat since Shri Vallabhacharyaji spent most of his days in these secluded towns. Gradually the child began to grow up giving both the parents immense happiness.

From the very young age, Shri Vallabhacharyaji had decided to mould his son to be an ardent devotee of Shri Krishna; and to turn his attention towards the seva of Shri Krishna. He therefore gave a tiny idol (Swaroop) of Shri Balkrishna to the child and taught him to offer one sweet* to the Lord as a part of the daily Seva, then Shri Vittalnathji could himself have the sweet offered to the Lord as Prasad*. Once, it so happened that He offered the sweet to Shri Balkrishna during the Seva. After some time, he noticed the tiny Lord lifting the sweet and begin to eat it. The child thought that Shri Balkrishna would not leave any prasada for him, and therefore tried to take it away from the Lord's hand, at which Lord himself began to pull it from his hand, holding it more firmly. At this time Shri Vallabhacharyaji happened to come by and witnessed the scene. It pleased him to know that Shri Vitthal had his first experience with Shri Krishna and decided to settle the matter. He thus fixed two pieces of sweets everyday. Thus began his life of divine experiences where his childhood was frequented with trysts and experiences with the Lord Himself showing signs of the life that he was to lead in future.

Imparting great joys of childhood to the parents the child Vitthal gradually began to grow up. It was at the age of eight that Shri Vitthal's yagnopavit ceremony (a ceremony where sacred thread is given to Brahmins) was performed according to Vedic rites in Kashi. Shri Vallabhacharyaji himself gave him the Gayatri Mantra as prescribed in the Vedas. Then began the education of the child. Shri Vallabhacharyaji initially began to teach the Vedas to his son, and later took him to Goverdhan for the Seva of Shrinathji. Later he taught him the basic principles of Seva and other sciences like astrology, after which he was taught the complete Vedic scriptures. He was sent to Kashi to learn about the various sects of Hindu religion from a scholar called Madhav Bhatt. Shri Vitthal proved himself to be an extraordinary student and within a short time, learnt every scripture and returned home a brilliant scholar. Pleased

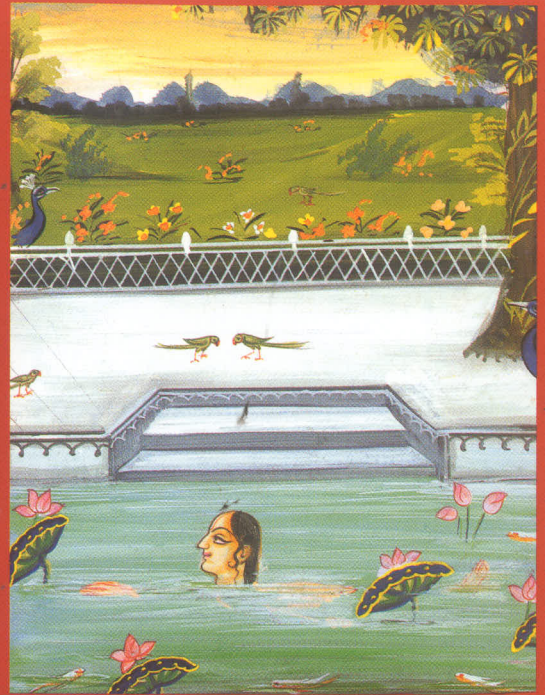
1. Remnants of food offered to the hard.
2. Thor - a special Type of Sweet.



Shri Vallabhacharya teaching his
sons the principles of Vedas

with the brilliant scholarly achievements of his son, Shri Vallabh then taught him the principles of Pushti Marg through an extensive study of the works written by him. His discourses on Shri Subhodhini (commentaries on Srinad Bhagwat written by Shri Vallabh himself) to his various disciples at various times and other discourse also influenced Shri Vitthal greatly. Even at that tender age he made it a regular rule to recite the 10th Canto of Shrimad Bhagwat every day. Seeing this ardent zeal of his son, Shri Vallabhacharyaji composed 'Trividh Namvali' which encompasses the essence of the 10th chapter of Srimad Bhagwat so that he could in short recite the 10th canto. The increasing literature in Braj (the local language) by eminent poet devotees like Surdas influenced Shri Vitthalnathji greatly and inspired in him the love for the various leelas of Shri Krishna. Moreover, the entire surrounding in which he grew up, was filled with love and devotion for the Lord and this deeply rooted devotion had a profound impact on his heart. But this was just one side of Shri Vitthal's childhood. Though surrounded by devotees and their devotion to Shri Krishna, Shri Vitthalnathji as a child was interested in playing as all children do. He loved swimming the vast waters of the Ganga, was fond of sports like wrestling and above all he loved horse riding and from his early years was an expert rider.

Also from the very childhood. He showed signs of being a great artist and a great lover of art. The various discourses by his father about the various Leelas of Shri Krishna's divine childhood, inspired in him poetry and lyrics from childhood itself, He composed a hymn to Shri Krishna in Sanskrit with perfect form of verse with perfect lyrical meters at that tender age of ten and was often engrossed in singing and hearing the various compositions written to Shri Krishna. Shri Krishna's divine Raas Leela, is connected music, and, Shri Vitthal loved music. He was an expert player of Beena and used to play it beautifully at the time of waking up the Lord (Before Mangala) and the bed time of the Lord (during Shayan) during the seva. However, everything artistic in him was only for the love of Shri Krishna. Shri Vallabhacharyaji once saw him play the Beena before the Lord but was aware that though Shri Vitthal's 'Beena' pleased the Lord, Yet his fingers had become rough and the long nail required to play the instrument might pierce the Lord's delicate form, he therefore called him and pointed towards his rough forefinger. Shri Vitthal immediately understood what his father was trying to tell him and for the love of Shri



Playing the Beena

Swimming the river Ganga

An Expert Horserider

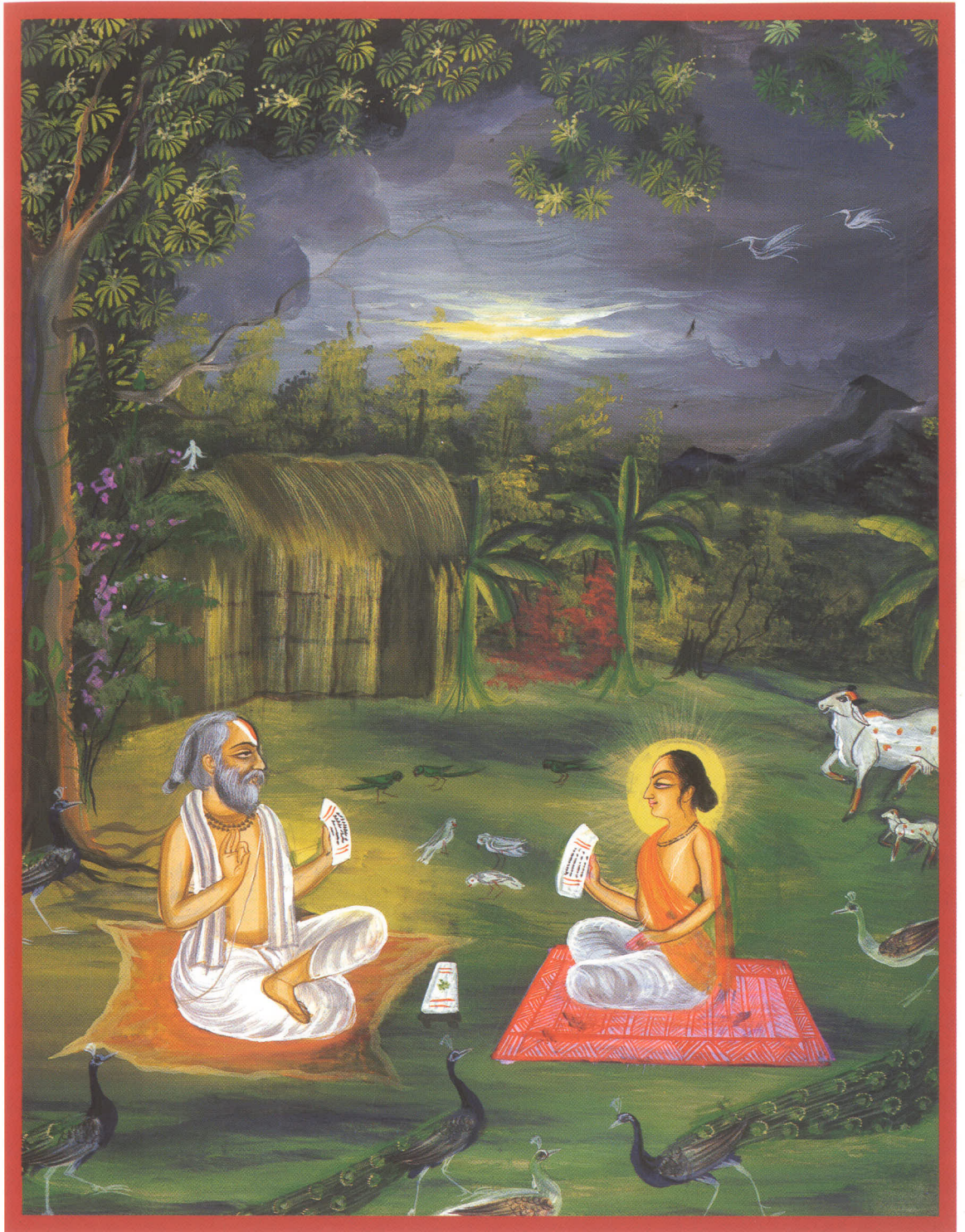
Krishna, gave up playing the Beena. His love for Shri Krishna even as a child far exceeded everything he ever did in his life and it was this love that inculcated everything beautiful in the Seva of Shrinathji.

And so the, young Shri Vitthalnathji a lover of sports and a great lover of every art, grew up with a strong foundation of Krishna Bhakti and a profound knowledge of every Hindu scripture and began to understand life with context to the philosophy of vedant while all this time his intense love for Shri Krishna grew from strength to strength with each passing day

It was when he was ten years old and his elder brother Shri Gopinathji was twelve, that Shri Vallabh received the divine signs to return to his eternal abode leaving his earthly body. Shri Vallabh therefore decided to reside in Adel for a little time to complete his commentaries on Srimad Bhagvat (Shri Subodhini) but he received yet another signal and therefore shortened them from 3rd chapter to the 10th ; after which Shri Vallabhacharyaji along with the whole family travelled to Vraj where he received the third signal beckoning him to for the eternal abode of the Lord Shri Vallabh by this time had completed his commentaries. He therefore summoned his family and all his chief disciples and commanded Damodardas Harsani and Padmanabhdas (two of his main disciples) to guide his sons regrading the principles of Pushti Marg in his absence and blessed the fifteen year old Vitthal with the knowledge and love for Shri Krishna after which he departed for, the Lord's eternal abode by entering the waters of the Ganga in Kashi.

“Having finished the mission of life in this world. He entered the Ganga from the Hanuman Ghat and stooping down in waters he disappeared. At that time a halo of divine light appeared on that place ascended to heaven and disappeared finally into the skies.” (Prof. Wason-Hindu Religions). His last advice to all was written on the sands of the banks of the river in 3½ shlokas.

Shri Gopinathji had inherited the leadership of Pushti cult from his divine father but, he was too attracted towards Shri Jagannath (the form of Shri Krishna in Puri) and decided to leave for Puri entrusting his family into Shri Vitthalnathjis' care, he handed over the leadership of Pushti Marg into the able hands of his brother.



At the Ashram of the Guru

Yet, at this stage Shri Vitthal was at a very tender age and was still an adolescent at heart. The great responsibility that had come his upon him in the absence of elders and the seriousness of his mission in life, the leadership of a very strong and different religious cult was something for which he was not ready yet.

The great legacy which he had inherited from his divine father was a great responsibility for such a young a person as himself and this greatly worried Shri Damodardas Harsani*, who was waiting for an occasion when he could explain him, about the great legacy which of his father. Once, when Shri Vitthalnathji was in the company of his friends. Damodardas heard him laughing and joking, at which he politely remarked that Pushti Marg was not for those who take life lightly but I is for people who spend every moment thinking about how far he is still from achieving the love of Shri Krishna therefore, to attain and experience the grace of the Lord himself should be the goal of very Vaishnav and for this, he must spend every moment of his life loving only the Lord. Shri Vitthal understood what Damodardas was implying and seriously began to accept his role as the leader of Pushti Marg and its followers. He knew Damodardas to be a person who was greatly loved and graced by his divine father and understood that if he could learn more about his father's principles of Pushti Marg, it was only from Damodardas.

This was the turning point in the of life Shri Vitthalnathji. The light reprimand by Damodardas affected him profoundly and set him thinking about his mission in life, the purpose of his life and the life of his father., He became more and more involved in Pushti Marg and its principles of Seva, and awakened selfless and unswerving love for Shri Krishna and the correct ways of humanity in him. He became deeply involved in the Seva and wherever he had any problem or query regarding the principles laid down by his father he would humbly approach Damodardas whom he acknowledged as his father's closest and greatest disciple and confidante. He was aware that Shri Vallabh had graced Damodardas immensely and had implanted in his heart every intricate detail of Pushti principles. Damodardas would then affectionately and carefully answer all his questions and queries as Shri Vallabhacharyaji would have wanted him to and was very happy to see the life of Shri Vitthalnathji closely following in his father's footsteps. Under the loving guid-

* The first and greatest follower of Shri Mahaprubhuji - who is also the first vaishnav of Pushti Marg.

ance of Damodardas, he began to organise his father's scattered literature, and to arrange it in a proper way to understand its sublimity and unearth its hidden meanings.

This guidance became regular sessions of discussions between Them and Shri Vittha who was by now sure that the principles of Pushti Marg, when spoken by Damodardas were actually inspired by his father himself, who, forever resided in his heart. The reverence and respect which Shri Vitthalnathji felt for him was thus doubled and he held him in a high esteem as he would his own father.

Even the other eminent disciples of Shri Vallabh who excelled in their understanding of his principles e.g. Rana Vyas. Padmanabhdas, Gadadhardas, Padma Raval, Kanaiyalal Kshatriya etc. came to Shri Vitthalnathji, who took advantage of their company and had regular discussions with them to absorb and learn more deeply about the teachings, the mission, the devotion and the philosophy of his great father. Damodardas awakened the greatness and divinity in Shri Vitthalnathji's life and his contemporaries, with their devotion towards Shri Vallabhacharyaji shaped the personality of shri Vitthal moulding it into a perfect structure of a perfect Guru.

It was then that Chacha Harivansh, a great Vaishnav devotee became the disciple came to the feet of Shri Vitthal and was inculcated into Pushti Marg by him. What Damodardas was to Shri Vallabhacharyaji Chacha Harivansh was to Shri Vitthal. Chacha Harivansh like Damodardas was not only a great devotee of Shri Krishna but also a great disciple of Shri Vitthalnathji who lived every minute of his life by through his grace and the divine principles of Bhakti given by him. It was during this period in his life that he lost his mother and Damodardas, but now Shri Vitthal was himself a great force of Pushti Bhakti and was ready to move ahead with the mission in his life. Under the expert guidance given by Damodardas he had already realised the greatness of Pushti Marg, the ways of spreading it, the ways to improvise on the Seva etc. His personality had taken a complete turn and shaped up according to his father's wishes. He was now ready for the role of the guru which was the mission for which he was born. People at that time saw an emergence of a great person, a great guru the likes of whom were never again witnessed in the history of this country.

Chapter II

THE DIVINE MISSION

Shri Vitthalnathji or Shri Vitthalesh Prabhuacharan as he was reverently called now had assumed the role of the leader of pushti Marg totally and absolutely. He began to inculcate many people into Pushti Marg and spread the principles of Pushti Marg into every corner of the country. For achieving this, he too, travelled extensively like his father and interacted freely with people from all levels in life. His sheer magnetic personality was enough to attract people towards him and make him their guru. He gave the people the Brahma Sambandh* like his father, and accepted them into the faith irrespective of their caste or class in society, provided, they pledged their unswerving devotion towards Shri Krishna. As the new leader of Pushti Marg he faced quite a few problems which were solved by his sheer resourceful thinking and his ardent love for Shrinathji. The first of the challenges came to him in the year 1590. When Shrinathji appeared in his dreams and ordered him that the Bengalis functioning in the temple were not looking after his seva in a proper way and they should be replaced by people who would really care for the Lord. At this particular time his elder brother Shri Gopinathji, who was then in charge of the administrative affairs of the temple atop the Giriraj hills was not present - Shri Vitthalnathji, out of respect for his elder brother who was then at Puri, could not take any decision regarding the affairs of the temple and at the same time was deeply concerned for the discomfort caused to Shrinathji. Yet, he could not take any action without consulting Shri Gopinathji, but Shrinathji did not wish to wait, he therefore, appeared in the dreams of another devotee Avdhootdas and ordered him to approach Krishnadas Adhikari - the supervisor in charge of the temple, and take appropriate action to rid the temple of the Bengalis.

As soon as Krishnadas was informed about this command, he left for Adeli where Shri Vitthalnathji resided, and informed him about Shrinathji's command. By then Shri Gopinathji had arrived from Puri and Shri Vitthal consulted him about this matter. They decided to let Krishnadas take the required action and gave him the permission to do whatever was necessary to drive out the Bengalis from the service

* A way by which a person, through the divine Prosaic Mantra can be initiated into Pushti Marg and establishing his relation with God.

of Shrinathji. These Bengalis were in service of Shrinathji because Shri Vallabhacharyaji had granted them this seva and to directly dismiss them from the service would be to oppose their father's command, but it was chiefly the pleasure and comfort of Shrinathji that was of the prime concern to Shri Vitthalnathji and Shri Gopinathji and therefore, they decided that Krishnadas take direct action while they would intervene into the matter when required. Krishnadas Adhikari, with their blessings, using his tact and intelligence, successfully drove out the Bengalis from the temple and invited Shri Gopinathji to take charge of the administration. The Bengalis complained about this matter in the court of Akbar¹ but to no avail as Bribal and Todarmal were the disciples of Shri Vitthalnathji and strongly advised Akbar regarding the matters of the Giriraj Temple.

Shri Gopinathji deputed the seva of Shrinathji to the Sanchora Brahmins² and advised Shri Vitthalnathji to reside there for some time and organise a proper all round routine of Seva making sure the Lord be made to feel most comfortable and happy at all times. He was so pleased with Krishnadas that he made him the Chief administrative officer of the temple.

Shri Vitthalnathji then began his task of organising the affairs of the temple. He first bought a big piece of land from the Vrajwasis and built a huge Gaushala (a shed for the cows) as Shri Krishna loved cows and the proper care of cows greatly pleased him. Next he realized that the water used for different purposes of the temple was inadequate and therefore to get enough water conveniently, had a well constructed near Rudra Kund. This facilitated the required water supply for the temple.

After this he began to seriously contemplate as to how to improvise upon the seva routine while encompassing every thing artistic and beautiful so as to please Shrinathji whose beautiful form was a perfect embodiment of Shringar Ras itself. Shri Vallabhacharyaji had given a beautiful form Seva but Shri Vitthalnathji wished to take it to the pinnacle of its beautiful and aesthetic glory, dedicating every art and every talent, a Krishna devotee ever possessed, at the feet of the Lord himself. He began to think about how to make Raaga (the art of Indian classical Music) Bhog (the art of Culinary delights) and Shringar (the art of fine dressing and adornment) an

1. The ruling Mughal Emperor of Delhi.

2. One of the Brahmin sub castes.

intricate part of the seva routine. He knew that Shrinathji is रसो वैसः¹ the enjoyer of every essence of every thing beautiful and that all beauty would be truly beautiful if dedicated to him. Again it was Damodardas Harsani who came to his aid suggesting that Shri Vitthalnathji pray to his father (We are not taking this work in a strict chronological order, hence we all mention Shri Damodardas Harsani here, though we have mentioned his death in the earlier chapter). Shri Vallabhacharyaji who is the eternal guru of every Vaishnav. Shri Vitthalnathji was greatly pleased by this suggestion and meditated on the form of his guru, his father. The bliss experienced by Him during this meditation is best described in his 'Sarvottam Stotra' a hymn dedicated to Shri Vallabhacharyaji describing his divinity, grace and form in thirty-five shlokas. By his immense grace Shri Vallabhacharyaji blessed his son by preaching to him the philosophy behind Krishna Bhakti and suggesting very subtly as to how he could improvise on the Seva routine Shri Vitthalnathji could not be more grateful, he immediately informed Damodardas about his father's command.

What Shri Vallabh had commanded was a way of life in which detachment (Tyaag) and attachment (Tyaag) went together Pushti Marg is a householder's religion this is an example of attachment, and Sanyas is never a way of Pushti Marg but every Vaishnav has to dedicate every thing that belonged to him at the feet of the Lord. This feeling of not possessing anything is detachment. More emphasis was laid on the Seva routine performed at home than in a temple. Shrinathji's temple has the sentiment of Nandalaya or the residence of Shri Nandji in Gokul and the seva is performed as per the routine of the child's daily activities. The routine of the Ashta Jhankis or the eight Darshan in a day and Ashta Bhog (offering of eight Bhog or food offerings in a day) was set according to round the clock pattern right from sunrise to sunset the routine has a definite pattern and sentiment of Shri Krishna as residing in the house of Nandraji and Yashodaji (His Parents) in Gokul. Shri Vitthalnathji absorbed this daily routine of Shri Krishna's life into the seva of Shrinathji and according to the season and the festival, prepared a very scientific routine to suit the delicate form and temperament of The Lord. Thus came a fixed time table which functioned round the clock from day to day.

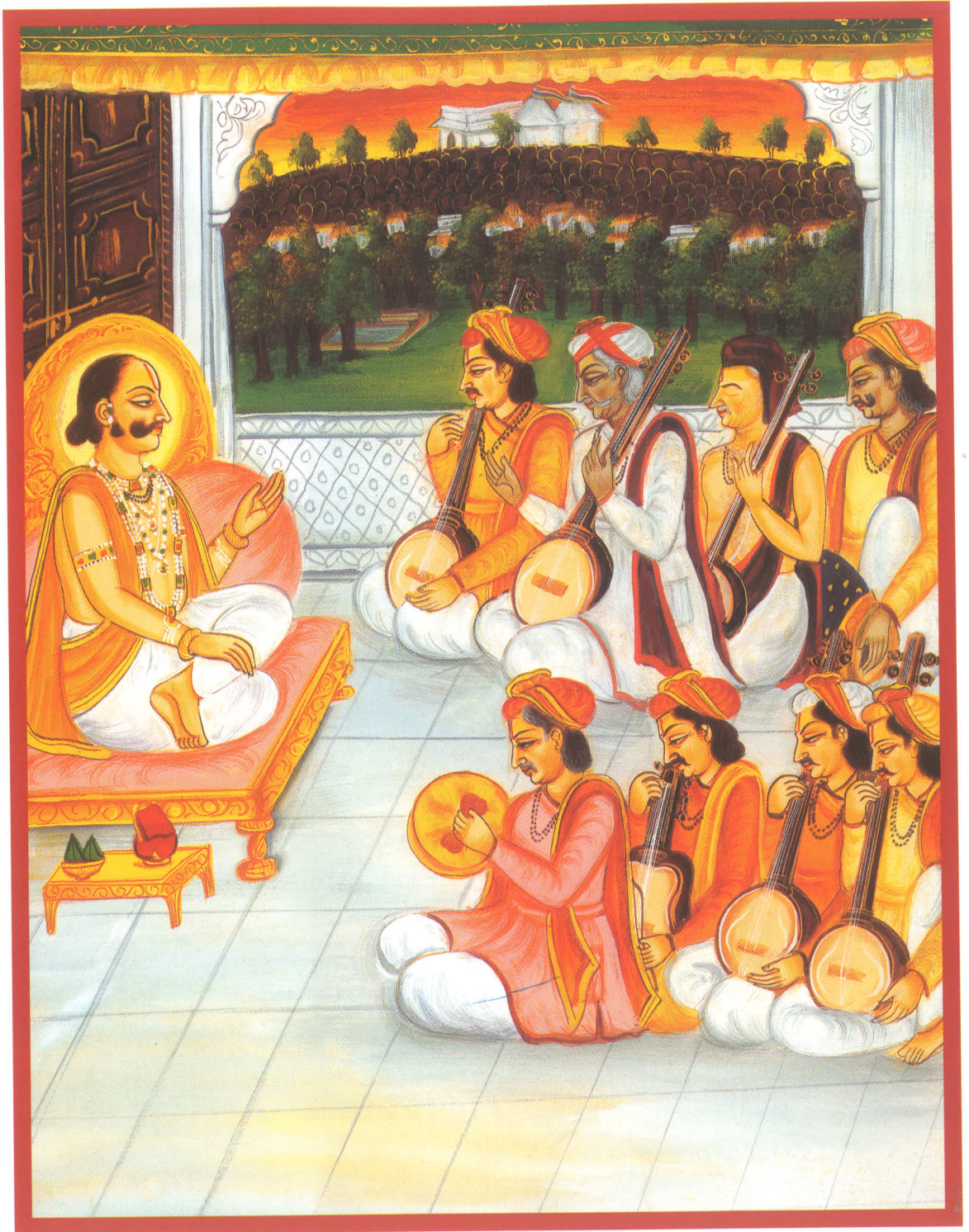
Once this daily routine was set, Shri Vitthalnathji inculcated Raaga (or the

1. The Personification of the essence of every thing beautiful

mode of Indian Classical Music to) in the routine. The Indian style of classical music has different Raagas for different times and seasons. He organised the Ashta Chhap poets or eight poet musicians in the Seva of Shrinathji. These were not only great singers but ardent Krishna devotees and overwhelmed by the grace of Shrinathji composed sublime lyrics praising his exquisite form and Leelas of shri Krishna Govind swami, Surdas, Krishnadas, Kumbhandas, Parmananddas, Chatrubhujdas Chhitsuami and Nanddas were the eight devotee poets* who were blessed by the grace of Shri Krishna and put to words and tunes the visions and the experiences had by them. Eight of them either singly or together sang in the temple composing beautiful verses to please Shrinathji in every possible way. The playing of the Beena during Mangla and Shayan, the Him naquaras' or drums during Raajbhog etc. were also organised into the daily routine. Since Shri Krishna's divine Leelas are associated with music, the organising of Raaga factor into the daily seva routine was very important. Also, festival times saw more of the beauty of Raagas when music and verses appropriately interplayed to match the mood of a particular festival e.g. if it was rainy season and Hindola festival, the Raag Malhar and Hindol would be sung adorning the appropriate compositions describing the festival thus giving more aesthetic sensuality to the all round beauty of the temple and the Lord's. All of Shri Vitthal's love for fine music was beautifully channelised in a very scientific manner in the seva as Shri Krishna Himself being a great lover of music (He is never separated from His flute) appreciated and enjoyed this greatly.

Then was organised the 'Bhog' (the daily meals and food offered to the Lord.) The system of Ashta Bhog-the eight meals offered to the Lord was established with a very scientific approach to it. The type of food offered was fixed seasonally. In winter when there is a chill in the atmosphere the Lord is offered heavy warm food made of dry fruits, ghee and strong herbs and spices which are warm for the constitution of the Lord. In summer, foods that are cool for the constitution are offered to the Lord. The food offered to Shrinathji shows the expertise of Indian Gourmet Cookery and a vast variety is prepared, so that it is easy for the Lord to choose and partake what He prefers. Even at night when the Lord retires to bed a box of food (Banta) and a pitcher of water (Jhari) are placed by the bedside in case the child wakes up with hunger. (These are the type of details that were to be organised in the

* out of these - Surdas, Krishnadas Kumbhandas Paemanandas were disciples of Shri Vallabh - while Govindswami, Chatrubhujdas, Chhitsuami and Nanddas were the disciples of Shri Vitthalnathji.



With 'Ashta Chhap' devotees

daily routine for 365 days. In organising the Bhog for Shrinathji Shri Vitthalnathji has taken into consideration the highest sentiment of Vatsalyabhaava (motherly feeling) and inculcated them into the daily seva, his only concern being the comfort of his beloved Lord.

Then came the more difficult aspect of Shringar. To classify and codify Shrinathji's Shringar for the whole year, took a lot more of aesthetic ability than one can ever imagine the Shringar of Shrinathji actually meant the dress, the jewellery, the Saja (on all round adornment of the place) the flower garlands, the perfumes and all other paraphernalia that Shrinathji loves being adorned with. Three things had to be considered (1) The Lord is the child playing in Nandalaya (2) He is a lover of every essence of everything beautiful (3) Every thing offered in terms of clothes and jewellery should suit the divine child according to the seasons and times for e.g. In winter the when one feels very cold in the chill weather one cannot move around in thin cotton clothes but has to put on something to sustain the chill in the weather. These and similar other details were to be organized in the daily seva routine for 365 days. Shri Vitthalnathji contemplated on all these factors deeply and systemised the Shringaar on the basis of 'यथा देहे तथा देवे' So much detailing was considered for the all year Shringar, that we can now find a codified detail of it which can be followed and known everywhere. The splendour of jewels, the combination of the vibrant colours of the seasonal flowers, the lively combinations of the type of clothes and its materials, the perfumes made from the extracts of flowers and hundreds of other details were finely laid down for Shrinathji with love, devotion and care by Shri Vitthalnathji. This Shringaar and 'Saaja' add to the beautiful grandeur of Shrinathji making him appear more sensuously beautiful than beauty itself. The grandeur and the glory that Shri Vitthalnathji has imbibed in the Shringar is indeed a labour of love of a person who could not ever think or feel about anything or anyone except about for the Lord Himself. The Rajadhiraj that Shri Kriashna is, (the king of all kings) the resplendence and the royal aura present in his Shringar makes it difficult for any one to tear his eyes away from his captivating form.

The detailing* of Raaga, Bhog and Shringar achieved their beautiful heights when Shri Vitthalnathji organised the seva for the festivals all year round.

* This is not much of detail but necessary here since this is the glory of Pushti Seva

Shrinathji, in order to complete the codification of Seva commanded Shri Vittahl, that he be offered the 'Khat Rutu Manorath' or a festival celebrating the six seasons of the year. Shri Vitthalnathji in accordance with Srimad Bhagvat's Principles, organised a monthful of festivities to honour Shrinathji's wishes. Lord was greatly pleased and therefore the same festivities were inculcated in the seva as the celebrations of all round festivals. The Seva routine on these festival achieved a magnificence and grander many times over than the daily one. The love, the devotion and the fanfare that went into the celebration was something that Shrinathji enjoyed and His devotees cherished. Shri Vitthalnathji's ability, skills and his artistic temperament were responsible for every pleasure that Shrinathji was offered. The grandeur and the resplendence of the Seva and Shringar not only during the festivals, but all year round were the purest and the highest love that Shri Vitthalnathji felt for Shri Krishna. As a result of his devotion and skills to organise, festivals like Holi Annakoot (in Diwali) Hindola, Chhappan Bhog etc. were celebrated beautifully and brought out the devotion that people felt for Shri Krishna in their hearts and they revelled in these festivals with great ecstasy.

Keeping to the line of the mode of Seva as shown by his father and taking the explicit wishes of Shrinathji into consideration increased the mode of the Seva routines and gave the seva routine a royal approach making it more attractive, grand and magnificent than ever. The deep scientific approach, the artistry and talent, the care of honouring of the Lord's wishes, that were absorbed in the routine have now become a part of seva followed by every follower of Pushti Marg. Shri Vitthalnathji passed on this great spirit of seva to every Vaishnav and this has been coming down to Vaishnav followers from one generation to next. He was organised seva in such a way that every member of a family (if it has its own Swaroop seva at home) can contribute in one way or the other towards their devotion to the Lord.

Shri Vitthalnathji showed us that aspect of seva, where every person can offer his best to the Lord in whatever he is good at. Since Shri Krishna is the enjoyer of the best of every thing, he accepts whatever his devotees offer him with love and devotion. He has taught generations of Pushti followers how to offer the best of their best feeling to the Lord. In this he has successfully taken the Pushti Bhakti preached,

by his father to its greatest heights and his inculcation of Raag, Bhog and Shringar into the seva routine has aroused the pleasure of the devotees who are every anxious to please the Lord in whichever way they can.

The well organized eight fold darshan, the multiple variety of bhog. The beauty of the artistic ambience surrounding the Lord, the many splendoured literature inspired in the hearts of the devotees, as well as the finery and magnificence of Shrinathji's attire and his bejewelled adornments, the grandeur of the many festivities that are witnessed in the Shrinathji temple are the legacy of Shri Vitthalnathji to Pushti Marg.

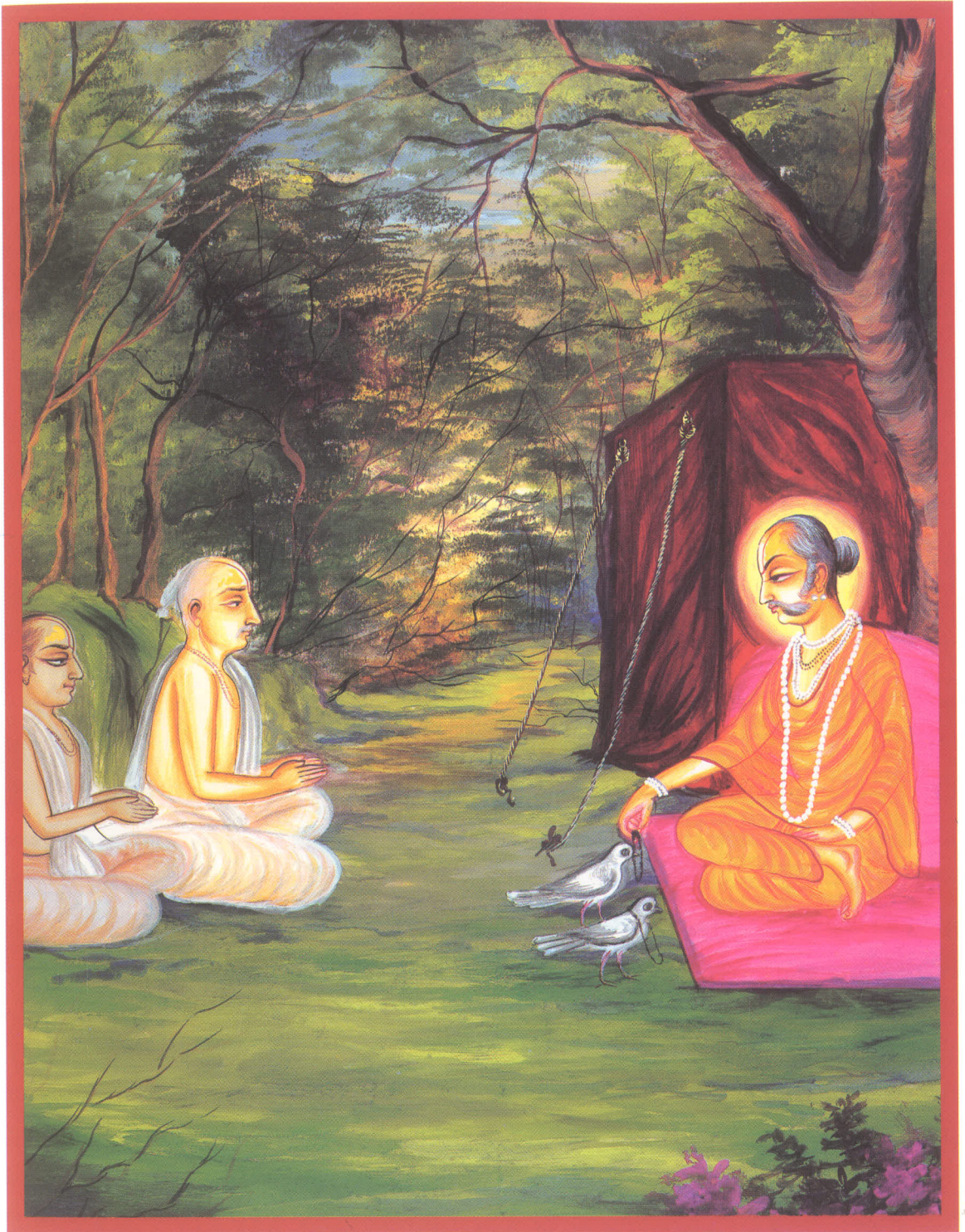
Along with this, it was the promotion of Braj language that was his greatest gift to us, Shri Vitthalnathji along with his sons, was in the seva of Shrinathji one day when he suddenly needed the chest of jewels, he ordered his 5th son Raghunathji (who was barely 4 years old then) to get it his orders were in Sanskrit and the child immediately set out to obey his fathers order, but later wondered as to what was demanded of him for he did not understand Sanskrit at that tender age, Shrinathji came to the child's rescue and explained to him what was needed and helped the boy to obey his father's orders. He then asked Shri Vitthalnathji not to use Sanskrit so frequently upon which Shri Vitthalnathji relied mother tongue was Telugu. Shrinathji said that he was just a Vrajwasi cowherd and he preferred his own Braj bhasha (language) to any other. After this Shri vitthal encouraged everyone to learn and speak the language as it was Shrinathji's favourite.

At that time Sanskrit was the language of the literates. But Shri Vitthalnathji in order to please Lord, himself spoke Braj and taught it to the others. The result of which, the best lyrical works of Pushti Marg are in Braj. Shri Vitthalnathji himself composed beautiful literature in Braj and Sanskrit and the Ashta Chhap poets gave sublime literature of surpassing beauty in the same language. These Kirtans* greatly pleased the Lord. Besides these eight poets, other great poets created great literature describing Shri Krishna's form and His divine Leelas. All of them have given literature which has enriched Pushti Marg in the temple before the Lord and immortalized if forever. Shir Vitthalnathji like his father encouraged all these poets to sing in the

* Lyrical poetic compositions describing the form, Leelas etc. of Shri Krishna.

temple before the Lord at which they felt happy and blessed. In fact this strengthened the foundation of Pushti Marg and gave it a distinct place of its own in Indian literature.

Had it not been for Shri Vitthalnathji's systematic organisation of all Indian Arts (especially music, Shringar, Literature etc) these aesthetics would never have reached a sublime position they are enjoying today, though they have been associated with religion, their association with Indian culture round the world became stronger. His idea of ideal seva was a beautiful combination of everything aesthetic prescribed in the Vedic texts and human psychology. It gave the Hindu religion a new dimension and human sentiments a new channel by which God could be experienced by the sheer force of aesthetics with the undercurrent of total devotion and dedication. Shri Vitthalnathji not only contributed greatly to the development of seva but also art, literature, music and culture of his times.



Intiating two doves into Pushti Marg

Chapter III

THE COMPASSIONATE GURU

Pushti Marg, as established by Shri Vallabhacharyaji had spread far and wide into every corner of India, but for this, he had himself travelled extensively for a the greater period of his life and had accepted people from every strata of society and made them his followers. He had embarked upon three major journeys throughout his life and this extended from one corner of the land to the other, accepting people into the Pushti fold.

But this was not enough to strengthen Pushti Marg and its principles, And to spread Krishna Bhakti after Shri Vallabh, was still a greater task. Shri Vitthalnathji as the real heir and successor to Shri Vallabhacharyaji's legacy decided to embark upon wide spread journeys meeting with people and arousing in their hearts the dormant forces of devotion. Also he desired to meet with his father's various followers around the country, who were ardent Krishna devotees and only existed for the sheer bliss that they enjoyed out of their devotional life Such devotees who were graced by the father were considered the pillars Pushti Marg by the son. Major part of his life until now had been spent in Adel and Vraj but Shri Vitthalnathji decided that time had now come to travel to distant places and spread Shri Vallabhacharyaji principles in distant lands.

He made six major journeys and came across a great number of people from all walks of life, who over whelmed by his divinity and his grace accepted him as his guru, and were inculcated into the Pushti, making Pushti Marg their way of life. Kings, queens, high officials, administrators, the financially affluent, and the ordinary to the level of low castes like fishermen and hunters, even thieves were graced by him and became followers of Pushti Marg embracing the virtuous and divine principles of the Marg living life full of devotion according to the teachings of their divine Guru. Among the great number of people who were his followers - 252 were the main followers - people who were graced immensely by him - and who experienced the divine leelas and grace of Shri Krishna. It was His principle to inculcate at least two lives into Pushti Marg and get them to surrender at the Lord's feet

and there has been an incident where he could not find two people he inculcated two doves by giving them Brahma Sambandh Mantra for the mission for which he was born was to spread and strenghten Pushti Marg amongst people so that they could live their lives according to the highest principles as laid down in Srinad Bhagwat. Though Shri Vallabh had deputed his elder son Gopinathji to be the leader of Pushti Marg and Gopinathji handled the leadership very well but it was due to his early demise that the leadership of the sect became Shri Vitthalnathji's responsibility and his personality and temperament automatically made people look upto him as the true heir of Shri Valabhacharyaji as far as the leadership of Pushti Marg was concerned. He worked greatly towards strengthening and nurturing the religious path as built by a his great father. He gradually rose to great prominence by the divinity present in him and the infinite grace Shri Vallabhacharyaji had bestowed on him.

Shri Vitthalnathji began to work for his divine mission and embarked upon his first journey to the East towards Dwarka in Gujarat. He began from Adel, reached Banaras met Shri Vallabhacharyaji's various disciples, then proceeded to Vraj. There too, he met the followers of Shri Vallabh and held discussions with them and then proceeded for Ujjain and then to Idar. Where the king of Idar by the name of Bharmall became his follwer, he then reached Gujarat by the year 1600, here a business man caled Bhailal Kothari became a follower at his feet. He then proceeded to Godhra, Morbi, Jamnagar and then to Dwarka from there he returned to Adel via towns like Rajnagar. On the way he accepted many people as his followers and taught them the ways of a pure devotional life. He deeply absorbed and studied the basic ways of Hindu Vedic culture and how to protect and strengthen it. He observed that to protect Hindu Art, Literature, Music etc. Bhakti or devotion would be absolutely necessary. He also started teaching Srimad Bhagvat and its principles to various scholars who came to him.

His followers were very devoted to him and often through letters, invited him to visit their towns and villages, so that they could take advantage of his visits and learn more from him. Once while reciting the commentaries on Srimad Bhagwat, he received a letter of invitation from Narayandas who was the Dewan* of Bengal.

* Chief Minister.

Narayandas was impressed by the life of one of his officers who was a devotee of the Pushti fold by the name of Muraridas. The way in which Muraridas lived and his mode of seva had a great impact in the heart of Narayandas who asked him to be his guru, at which Muraridas suggested to him to make Shri Vitthalnathji his guru, because it was he who had graced him by making him his follower. Narayandas therefore invited Shri Vitthalnathji to Bengal and he, ever gracious towards his devotees, visited Bengal in 1609 where Narayandas and his wife became his followers and learnt from him the ways of Pushti Marg.

Thereafter, he travelled to Rajputana (Rajasthan) where he accepted Haridas into the Pushti fold and even made the sister of King Jaimal of Medta his follower from there, he proceeded for the second time, towards Gujarat. At Rajnagar (Ahmedabad), he resided with his devotee Bhailal Kothari for a little time. By this time, by Shri Vitthalnathji's blessings Bhailal Kothari was living a life of devotion absolutely surrendered, in every way, at the feet of the Lord. His life was an absolute example of a person who lived only for love of Shri Krishna.

Shri Vitthal's grace, his fame as a Guru, as a great scholar and his way of life however aroused quite a lot of jealousy in people who did not know him as he really was. One such incident happened while he was in Dholka (in Gujarat). The queen of Dholka by the name of Lachhbai, was told by a brahmin, that a fakir from Gokul was residing with Bhailal Kothari, and he extracted all wealth from people who became his followers. On hearing this the queen sent his minister Baazbahadur to investigate into the matter. When the minister arrived at Bhailal Kothari's house all he could see was the fakir (Shri Vitthalnathji) peacefully reciting Shrimad Bhagwat surrounded by his Rajput followers. This scene inspired in his heart a strange feeling of devotion, making him forget the purpose of his visit. When Shri Vitthalnathji finished his reading of Shri Subodhini (commentaries by Shri Vallabh on Srimad Bhagwat) the minister remembered the purpose of his visit. This time when he looked at Shri Vitthalnathji, he had the feeling that he was encountering a divine personality and, to doubt this great man, would be a huge mistake. He therefore fell at his feet asking him to be forgiven. At that time, there was a famine in Gujarat but Shri Vitthalnathji remarked that soon Gujarat, would receive rains. The minister was

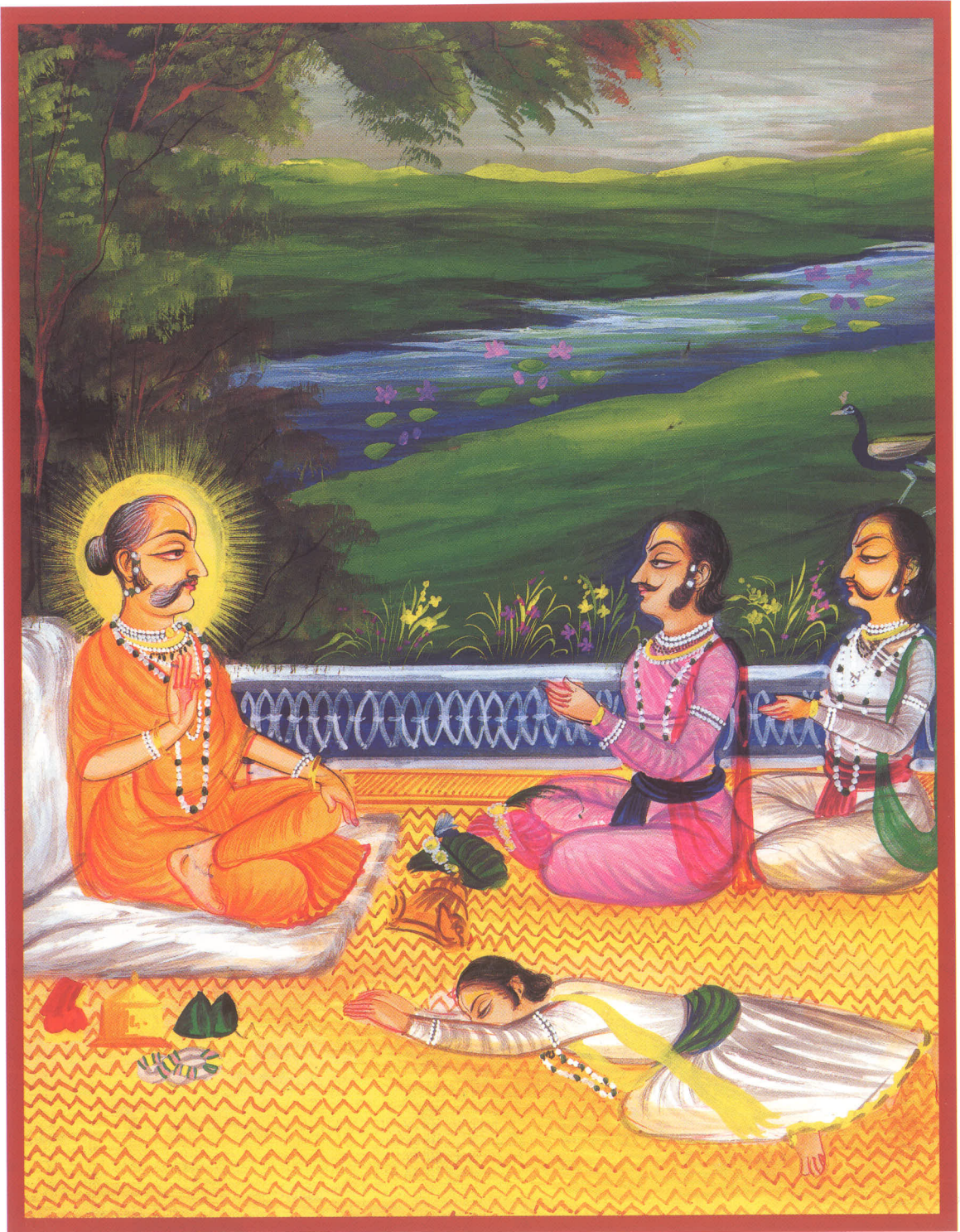
too pleased to hear this, he returned to his native town, on his way back he witnessed heavy rains and upon reaching Dholka he told the queen about the whole incident and also told her that Gujarat had received rains due to the grace of Shri Vitthal. The minister advised her not antagonize such a divine personality but instead to punish the brahmin who was spreading such lies. The queen imprisoned the brahmin, the news of which travelled to Shri Vitthalnathji. Ever compassionate that he was, he immediately sent a message to the queen requesting her to free the poor brahmin, without punishing him. The brahmin ashamed of himself, fell at his feet and requested him to accept him as his disciple.

Then Shri Vitthalnathji arrived at a small town called Alina where he accepted a brahmin Mahidhar and his sister as his followers. The family of Mahidhar were all followers of Shri Vallabh and were actively involved in the spread of Pushti Marg.

The followers of Shri Vallabhacharyaji and then Shri Vitthalnathji in these various towns of Gujarat e.g. Rajnagar, Godhra, Alina, Khambhat, Jamnagar, Morbi, Dwarka all involved themselves in the spread of Pushti Marg by leading their lives according to its highest principles. Thereafter meeting with, and blessing all these devotees, Shri Vitthalnathji returned to Adel from Godhra, thus ending his second journey of Gujarat from where again he proceeded to Vraj for the seva of Shrinathji. Here he met Puranmall Kshatriya one of the most ardent followers of his father and a great devotee. Puranmall had dedicated whatever he possessed at the feet of Shri Vallabhacharyaji in order to build the temple that Shrinathji wished for. He was therefore a favourite of Shri Vallabhacharyaji and was greatly revered by Shri Vitthalnathji. Thereafter, he returned to Adel, where king Jyotsingh of Bikaner came to meet him and became his follower. From Adel he proceeded towards Charnat and performed a Som Yagna.

After a few years in the year 1613 Shri Vitthalnathji again started for a journey towards Dwarka, this time along with going for a darshan of Shri Dwarkadheesh*. He had a wish to settle the matter between the two brahmin sub castes fighting each other for the administrative affairs of the temple. Due to this

* The Chief deity of Dwarka temple.



**Birbal coming to the feet of
Shri Vitthalnathji**

quarrel, the devotees who came to Dwarka found it difficult to go to the temple. He proceeded to Dwarka via Idar, and Aasarva, reached Dwarka and settled the matter, doing absolute justice. Then he headed for Adel via Aasarva, from where he proceeded to Jagannathpuri and stayed there till the festival of Rath Yatra and returned to Adel where he had a huge rath (chariot) made, and celebrated the festival of Rath Yatra in Giriraj.

Besides being a vedantic scholar he was a profound knower of sciences like astrology; on the basis of which he could foresee serious trouble brewing over Adel, exactly at that time, a few of his followers from Gujarat came to see him, bringing along a poet devotee by the name of Madhavdas. Madhavdas recited one of his compositions singing the Gokul Leela of Shri Krishna, hearing which, Shri Vitthalnathji decided to take up permanent residence in Gokul. Thus for the love of Shri Krishna and His favourite Vraj Bhoomi and for the sake of his followers he left Adel which had been his residence for 36 years. A few days after he left for Vraj. Akbar invaded Adel and annexed it to his territory.

Queen Durgawati of Gadha (Mandavgadh) was a great Krishna devotee and had patronised many saints and scholars; she invited Shri Vitthalnathji to take up residence in Gadha itself, accepting her invitation, he journeyed to Gadha via Bundelkhand and decided to stay there for some time. The Queen was accepted into the Pushti Marg fold and her devotion became stronger. Here a Chariot similar to the one in Jagannathpuri was made and Rath Yatra was celebrated with great grandeur. The queen gifted Shri Vitthal-land equivalent to 108 villages, a great amount of gold etc. These villages were distributed by him amongst the brahmins of his caste and they remain in their possession to this day. Here Birbal (one of the nine gems of Akbar's Court) came to be a follower of Shri Vitthalnathji who gifted him a jacket, wearing which, Birbal's fame spread in every corner of the land.

Once while he was still in Gadha, he could foresee the destruction of the Kingdom and decided to take leave of the queen and left for Gokul in the year 1620. Durgawati decided to have a huge residence built for him and his family. Such a mansion by the name of 'Satghara' was built in Mathura, where Shri Vitthalnathji took up residence. Here he spent his days totally absorbed in Krishna Bhakti. His person-

ality and his compassionate nature won the respect of everyone who came in contact with him.

However, there was one local brahmin of Mathura by the name of Chhitu who grudged him this respect and decided to test his powers. He approached Shri Vitthalnathji and mockingly said that Shri Vitthal was god incarnate and placed a counterfeit coin and a false coconut as a gift at his feet. Shri Vitthal looked at him and realised what the man had actually come for. He looked at the counterfeit coin and sent his servant to get it exchanged for smaller change. He took the false coconut and had it cut and distributed it as prasad to everyone present. Chhitu realised the divinity of Shri Vitthal and was ashamed for his behaviour and overcome with remorse fell at his feet asking for his forgiveness in a beautiful lyrical composition.

Chhitu who had come to test shri Vitthalnathji and laugh at him was converted into a Krishna Devotee by his divine grace, accepted into Pushti Marg and engaged to sing in front of Shrinathji as one of Ashta Chhap and was thereafter known as Chhit Swami.

In the year 1623, Raja Todarmal, the famous Rajput revenue minister in Akbar's court, became his follower and was accepted into Pushti Marg.

For the fourth time Shri Vitthalnathji decided to embark upon a journey to Gujarat. On the way, he embarked on the Nagmati river, where he came across some fishermen. Shri Vitthalnathji talked to them about Ahinsa (non-violence) and asked them, whether they could do any work other than fishing, upon which they replied that they could do farming but they had no land to cultivate. He discussed this with the King of that region and had them given some land for cultivation. The fishermen were happy and promised they would never kill for a living, pledged to be honest and hard working and always be devoted to God. They were later accepted as followers of Pushti Marg, by Shri Vitthal, he accepted a lower caste of fishermen and became their revered guru. At first they found it difficult to live their lives on the principles of devotion but gradually, they became good vaishnav devotees. He then proceeded towards Dwarka and returned via Jaam Khambahlia, where a Sanskrit

scholar by the name of Kalyan Bhatt became his follower and was taught the principles of Pushti Marg by him. Then he reached Jamnagar where he accepted a low cast cobbler by the name of Vasandas as his follower. When accepting any person as his follower. Shri Vitthalnathji never regarded caste or class of a person as the deciding factor. He graced the person and by his blessing, inspired Krishna Bhakti in the heart of his followers. Any one who wished to live according to the principle laid down by Shri Vallabhacharya was readily accepted into the fold by Shri Vitthalnathji.

By the end of the 4th journey, on his way to Medta and Mewar (Rajasthan) he accepted Jaimal (Prince of Mewar) Ajab Kunver as his followers. Ajab Kunver was the sister-in-law and a contemporary of Mirabai the famous Krishna devotee she became his follower and accepted Pushti Marg as way of life. She was an ardent devotee of Shrinathji and He reciprocated her devotion with love and played Chopat (game of dice) with her. On seeing Ajab Kunver Shri Vitthalnathji had predicted that Shrinathji will one day leave his divine abode in Vraj and travel for some time and reside elsewhere for a certain period of time. For her sake Shrinathji settled down in Mewar where He graces his devotees even today.

Even while Shri Vitthalnathji resided in Mathura, he came across a wide cross section of people, who either came to pay their respects to him or meet him for some dialogue or dabate-regarding the Hindu religion. Once it so happened that one of the queens of Akbar (the Mughal Emperor ruling over India at that time) was travelling on the banks of River Yamuna and was enticed by the divine looks of Shri Vitthalnath who was meditating there. The calm purity on his face inspired her to make a very strange request from him. She asked from him a Charm (Mantra) by which she could permanently captivate her husband the King, and always remain his favourite Shri Vitthalnathji who always hated deceit and hypocrisy wrote some thing on a piece of paper, packed it in a trinket and gave it to her. The story of this charm soon spread in the palace and reached the king, who was angry with the queen for deceiving him by the charm and asked her to show it to him. Upon opening the paper he read something which made him respect Shri Vitthalnathji and want to go and meet him to pay his respects. On the paper was an advice which said that no Mantra (Spell) or tantra could ever work for a woman who was not devoted towards her



Adorned with Royal Paraphernalia given by Akbar Badshah

husband. The queen too, was overwhelmed and Akbar, along with birbal (who was also the follower of Shri Vitthal) came to meet Shri Vitthal in Gokul. The king paid his respects to Shri Vitthal and offered a precious jewel at his feet. But he who was never impressed by wealth, took the jewel and threw it into the river Yamuna. This made the king upset and he asked Shri Vitthalnathji why he had thrown away such a precious jewel. Shri Vitthal dipped, his hand in the yamuna and surprised the king by showing him a handful of similar jewels. The king understood that Shri Vitthal's divinity needed no valuable jewels and wealth for himself, he was a person to whom the greatest riches and wealth never mattered. From that day Akbar's interest and respect for Hindu religion increased, he accepted certain paraphernalia the Hindu Jacket, tilak and tulsi mala for himself. He often met with Shri Vitthal and sought advice from him in religious, social and judicial matters, his queen Taj Bibi became Shri Vitthalnathji's disciple and accepted the Pushti way of life after visiting the temple of Shrinathji. Akbar so respected Shri Vitthalnathji that he bestowed on him the title of 'Goswami' and he later came to be called Shri Gusainji the colloquial term for Goswami. Due to this incident, Hindu religious leaders and scholars were respected and honoured everywhere they went and this added to the glory of the Hindu religion. The meeting which the king had with Shri Vitthalnathji had a very deep impact on the king. He honoured him with a royal dress and other paraphernalia used for royalty, only, and made provisions which were honoured by three generations after him to respect the Hindu religious policies and they even honoured the descendants of Shri Vitthal vast grants of land were given to Him by the king. Whenever the king was in Delhi or Agra he came to Shri Vitthalnathji and held religious discussions with him absorbing the essence of everything sublime about Hindu Religion.

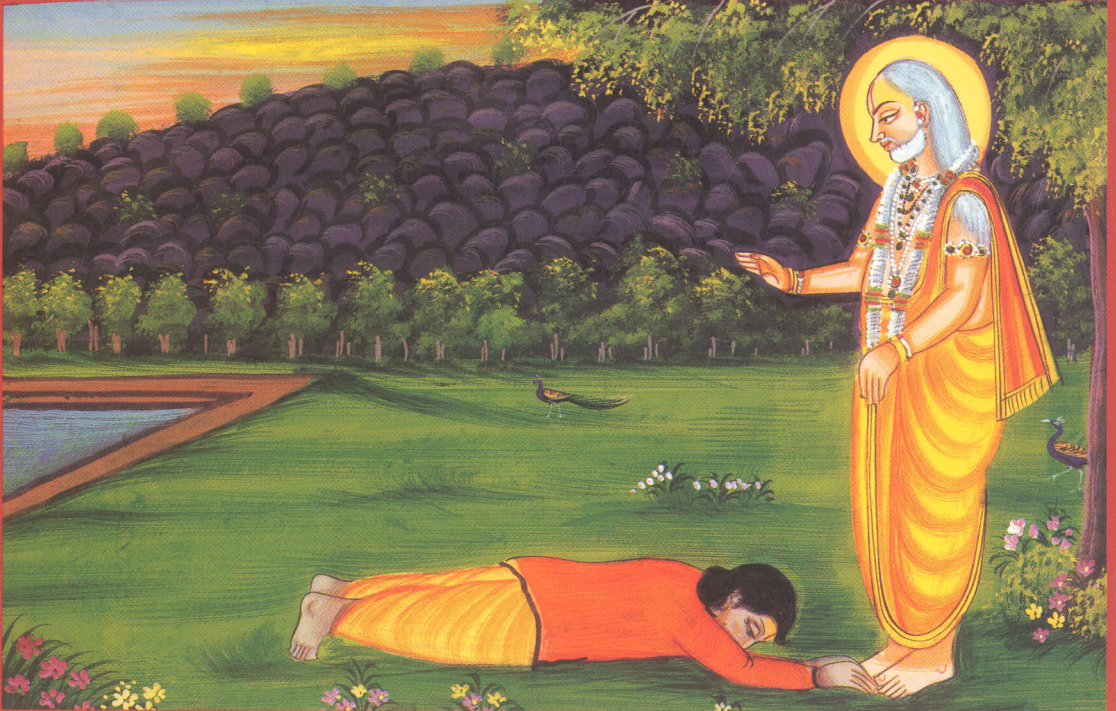
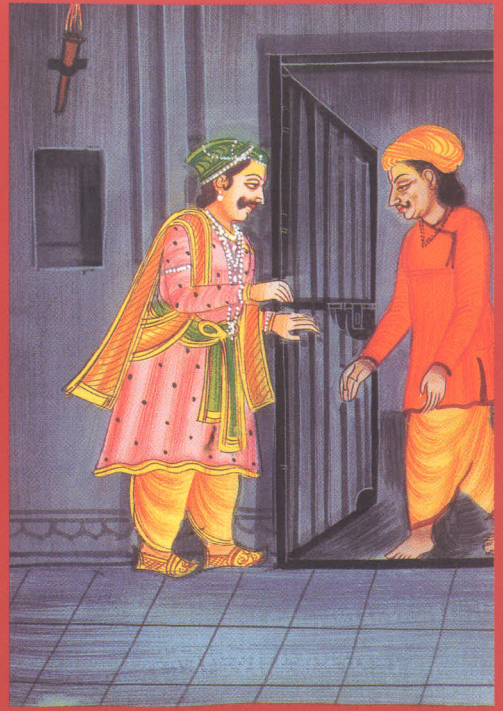
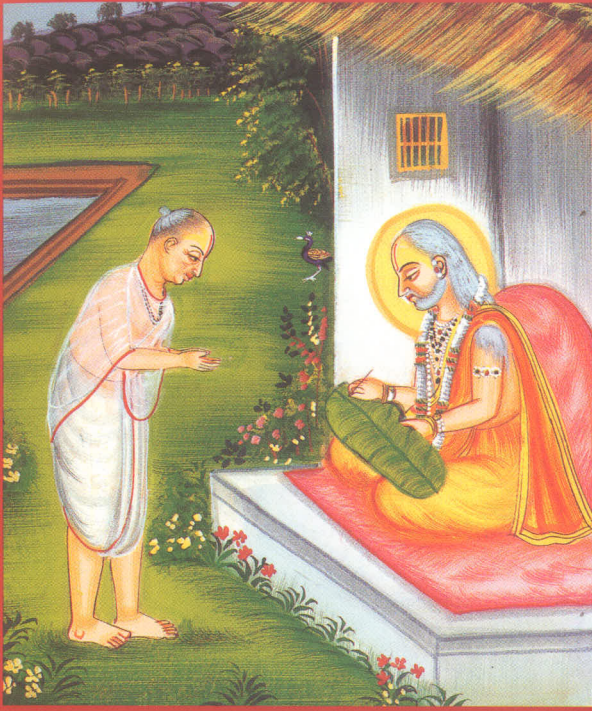
Shri Vitthalnathji along with his various tours round the country also toured Vraj, systematically visiting every place connected with Shri Krishna's divine Leelas, thereby becoming more and more engrossed in his devotion. It was after second such tour of Vraj that the singular most important event of his life occurred. Shrinathji, often to test His devotee sometimes puts him in adverse circumstances. He desired Shri Vitthal to experience the pangs of separation from him, and thus strengthen his devotion and love for him. It so happened that Shri Vitthalnathji was about to take

his first step towards the temple on the hill when Krishnadas Adhikari the administrator of the temple prevented him from doing so; not only that, he said that the real heir to the temple and seva, Shri Purushottam (Shri Gopinath's son) was already in the temple performing the seva and it was not necessary for him to go to the temple. Shri Vitthalnathji respecting Krishnadas's Adhikari's orders (because he was the disciple of Shri Vallabhacharyaji himself) not wanting a family feud, accepted the command as the Nathji's explicit wish, did not go to the temple, instead he took up residence at a place called Chandsarovar, from where he could see the Dhwas the seven flags on the roof of the temple.

Now was the real test of the devotee, He was absolutely lonely without the darshan and Seva. The separation weighed heavy on his heart and his heart ached without his beloved. Every moment of the day and night passed in absolute remembrance of him. It is said that love is at its highest during the period of separation, and what Shri Vitthalnathji felt at that time without the Lord is undecribable. In his desperation, he used to write one letter every day to Shrinathji where he pined for the Lord and requested him to grant his Seva again. He used to make a flower garland everyday and send, it with Ramdas who served in the temple. Ramdas was so overcome by his grief that he could not bear to see his condition. He therefore came to meet him everyday and carried the garland and the letter to Shrinathji. The Lord too, was restless without him and used to send replies to his letter on a beateel leaf which Shri Vitthalnathji after reading them dissolved in water and drank. This continued for six months. For six long months them in the devotee and the Lord were separated he pined for and the Lord experienced those emotions of sublime love which is not known to many.

When Birbal came to know about this matter he intervened and ordered Krishnadas to revoke his orders and had him arrested. Shri Vitthalnathji came to know about this and had Krishnadas released immediately (who now fell at Shri Vitthal's feet asking for forgiveness). The ever compassionate guru forgave Krishnadas and along with him went to the temple to join the seva of his beloved Lord.

In 1626 Shri Vitthalnathji travelled to Northern India going as far as Badrinath,



Top left - writing a letter to Shrinathji

Top Right- Having Krishnadas adhikari released from Jail

Krishnadas adhikari falling at the feet of Shri Vitthalnathji



Above left
Raskhan

Above right
Tajbibi (Queen of Akbar Badshah)

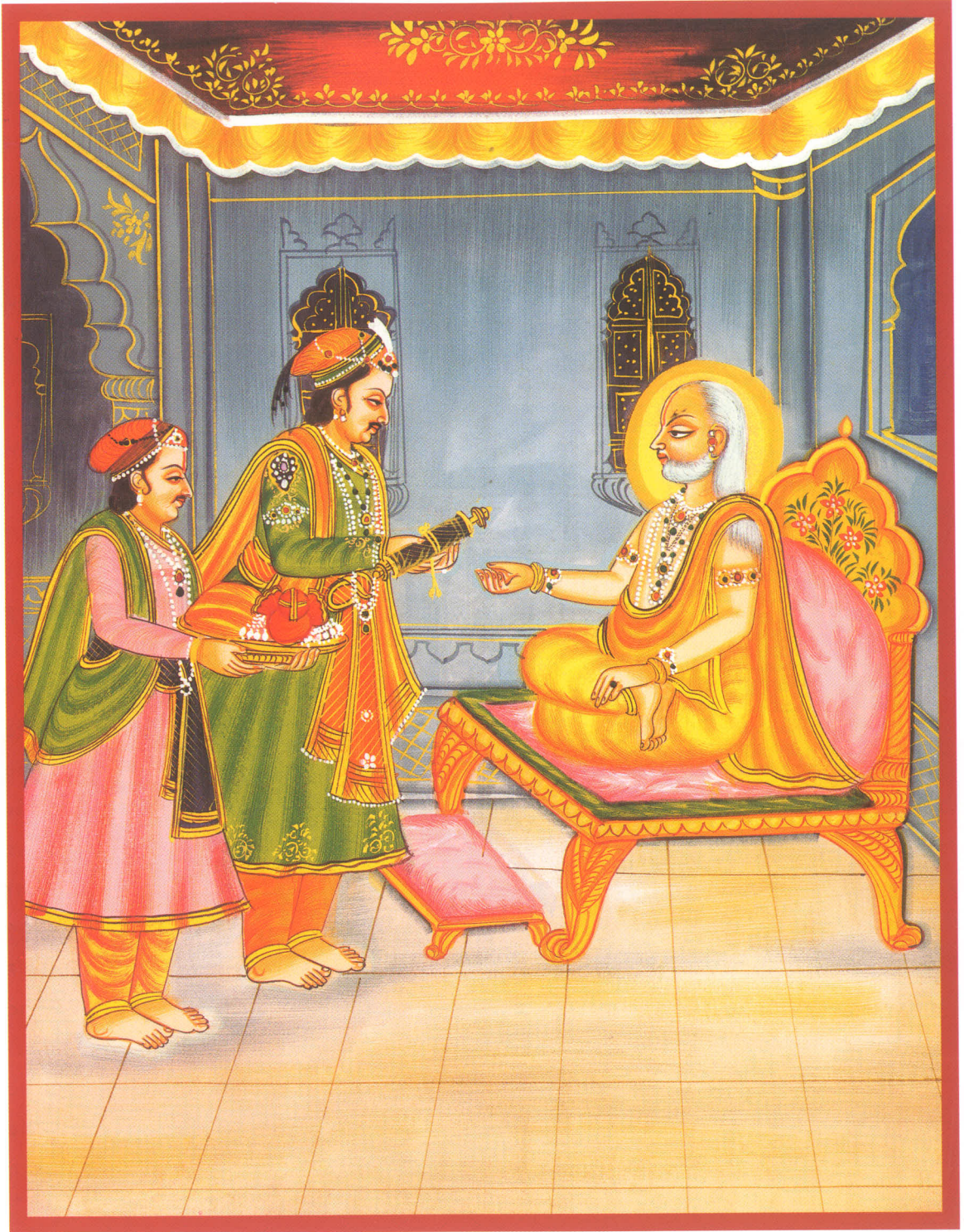
Below - Ali Khan Pathan and Pirjadi

on the way accepting who ever wished to be this followers into the Pushti fold. Thereafter in the following year he went to Delhi on Birbal's invitation, where he was honoured by Akbar and and all rights over the town of Gokul and area around it were granted to him and he decided to permanently reside in Gokul. He, along with his family, and the family deity Shri Navnitpriyaji shifted to Gokul with great fanfare and celebration. He spent a lot of time effort and money in making Gokul a really beautiful town preventing criminals from inhabiting the town to prevent crimes, oragnised the land for proper cultivation and cattle grazing so that the increased income could be of more use to the temple.

In 1631 he embarked upon his 5th journey towards Dwarka. As in his previous tours, this time also he met many of his followers and accepted a lot of people into the Pushti fold. While he was in Jamnagar he was warned by the rule himself that there were many highway robbers or the way and it was not safe to travel to Dwarka but unperturbed by all this, he went ahead. On the way, he encountered these robbers but his divine personality prevented the robbers from plundering his entourage. Instead the mother of the leader, became his follower and ensured their safety till he reached to Gokul, where he accepted Alikhan Pathan and his daughter Peerjadi as his followers. Alikhan and his daughter though muslims were enticed and drawn by Shrinathji's form and were ardent devotees of Shrinathji. He then travelled to Agra where. Birbal's daughter became his follower. Among his prominet muslim followers was Taj Bibi-Akbar's queen. Taj Bibi became his followr and accepted Pushti Marg as a way of life. She was graced by him to such an extent that she became an ardent devotee of Shrinathji who graced her immensely by playing Chopat (Dice) with her. She composed beautiful lyrics praising the Lord's form and Leelas and ultimately left the world while still in the temple singing the praises of Shrinathji. The Lord graced her with his darshan very often. Taj Bibi offered Shrinathji a Mughal style of dress*, which was so appreciated by Him, that he asked Shri Vitthalnathji to offer this dress at least once very year, respecting the divine wishes Nathji this dress in was included in the code of Shringar routine of the year.

In 1637 accepting Bhailal Kothari's invitation Shri Vitthal again journeyed

* Suthan - Patka



Akbar granting the 'Firmans' of the area of Gokul



Blessing the Child Gopaldas

towards Gujarat from Gokul. He proceeded to Fatehpur Sikri then to Idar, Vadnagar, Veernagar, Mehsana gozaria, Vasaai to Siddhpur and then to Assarva to grace Bhailal Kothari. Here he graced Bhailal Kothari's son-in-law (Gopaldas who was mute) and by his grace gave him the power of speech. Not only that, Gopaldas was graced in such a way that at the age of nine composed a poetic composition called 'Navaakhyan' which praised and described the grace of Shri Vallabh and Shri Vitthal.

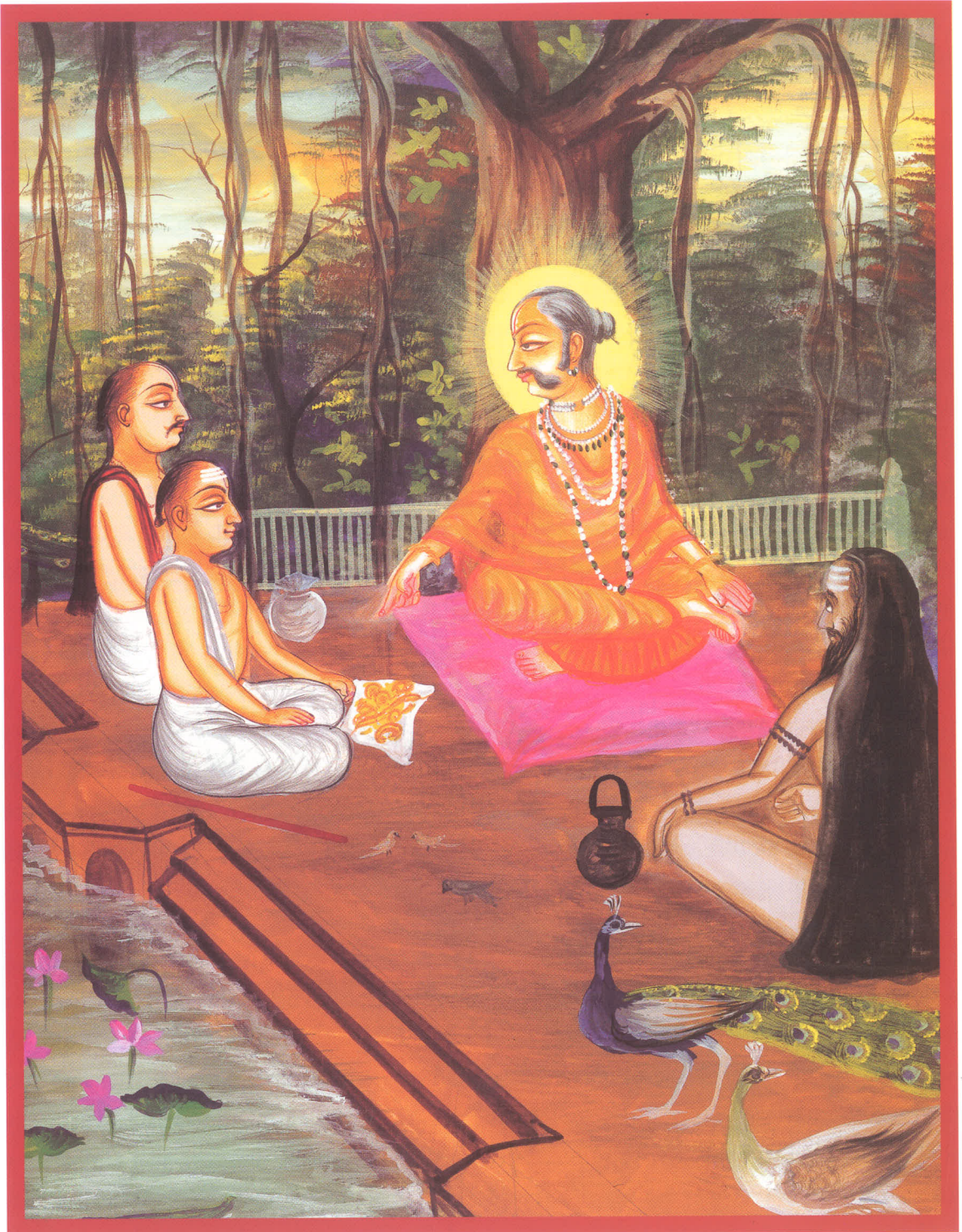
Thereafter he proceeded to Dwarka and returned to Gokul via Khambhat, Mahudha, Umreth, Nadiad, Ahmadabad then to smaller towns of Gujarat and smaller villages, thus talking more and more followers into the Pushti fold. He too, like his divine father travelled extensively, understanding the need to be in touch with people in different corners of the country. His mission of spreading and strengthening Pushti Marg needed him to interact with people from all walks of life. Thus we can come to understand that people from every strata of society be it Emperor Akbar or the poor fishermen of remote villages were impressed and enchanted with his divinity, his charisma, his compassion and his profound devotion. They were all drawn towards him and accepted him as their guru. So forth right was he in his teachings, that people readily accepted them and made them their way of life. As a Guru Shri Vitthalnathji greatly succeeded in invoking and inculcating the highest principles of devotion in his followers, thus raising them from their worldly life towards a more divine one, a life which was often full of divine experiences and expressions. In him his followers saw a guru who could lead them from darkness towards light from falsehood towards truth, from materialistic pleasures to the bliss of pure devotion towards Shri Krishna.

Chapter - IV

The Divine Personality

Shri Vitthal's personality stands out quite in contrast with the personality of his father. While Shri Vallabhacharyaji advocated simplicity in life and simplistic mode of seva and practically was an ascetic, his son lived amongst opulence showed a very opulent mode of seva, yet was a pure ascetic at heart. Though surrounded by wealth and riches gifted to him by his various royal followers, wealth and its glitter never affected him. Time and again he had shown that a person's wealth should always be used for the purpose of seva than for his own pleasures as every thing a devotee possesses should be dedicated at the feet of Shri Krishna. This aspect of his personality was clear when he threw away the precious stone that Akbar presented to him into the waters of the Yamuna. Once it so happened on the Manikarnika Ghat in Kashi, he was challenged by a sanyasi that if he was a true ascetic he should renounce all his possessions at which Shri Vitthal immediately did so. He then asked the sanyasi to do so at which the sanyasi replied that he had nothing whatsoever to renounce except for a 'Kamandalu' (water pitcher) and that he could not give up. At this Shri Vitthalnathji told him that a true sanyasi would be ready to give up every thing because his life was based on the strong faith in God and nothing else should ever matter to him. Yet, the members of the royalty who became his followers gifted him enormous wealth which was put to use for the seva of his Lord. Thus wealth and Material possessions never impressed on interested him.

He was a devotee, an ascetic, a lover of Shri Krishna, a scholar, an artist, a very compassionate person being, a divine guru, a strong spiritual leader, proper interpreter of Shri Vallabhacharyaji's principles a Philosopher himself and above all was divinity personified. His personality was multi dimensional and this showed through the various happenings and incidents at different times in his life. Not only that, he proved himself a wise judge, at times a proper administrator and above all a great organizer. The way he rid the temple of all of the corrupt Bengalis show him to be a person having a greatly resourceful intellect and diplomatic skills. A fine organiser, he organized the seva routine of Shrinathji, codified it and gave it a new

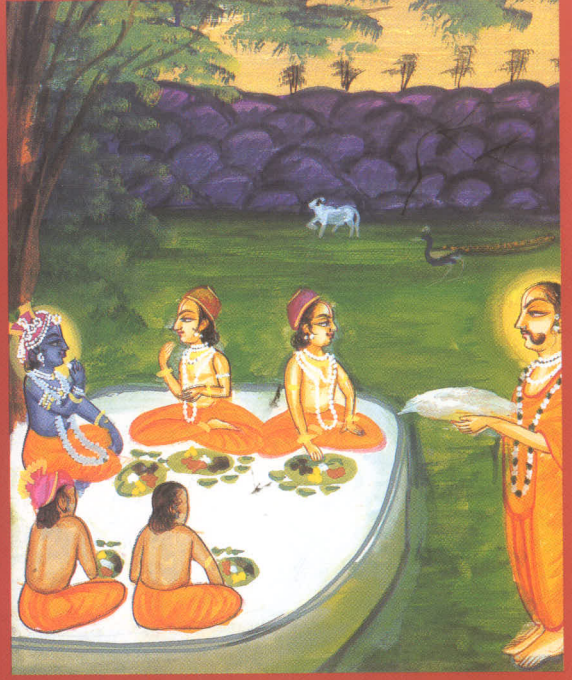
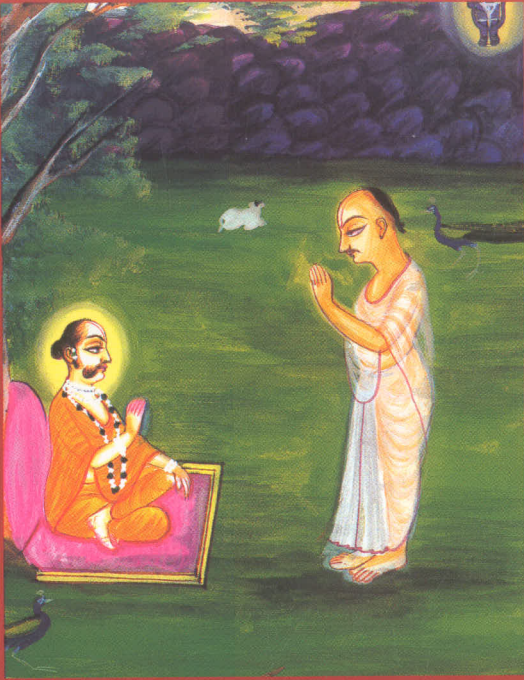


**Renouncing his worldly possessions
at Manikarnika, Ghat Kashi**

scientific approach. Great kings like Akbar, often sought his advice in Judicial matters of the court as also in religious ones. Once when a Vaishnav housewife from Surat was harassed by a corrupt administrative officer, the matter had reached the court of Akbar. The complications arising out of the matter so baffled Akbar that he could not decide the matter and do justice. Akbar then invited Shri Vitthalnathji to do justice in this matter. Shri Vitthalnathji with his innate sense of justice and administrative skills saved the housewife from disgrace and exposed the corrupt officer thus showing his ability as a judge and a protector and saviour of the innocents. Birbal, Todarmal, Man Singh, Maharani Diuragavati etc. all sought his advice and blessings at various times for various reasons. Yet, amongst these all round activities he was a total Krishna Bhakt as not even for a fraction of a second was this deep feeling of this divine love alienated from his heart.

He had led quite a number of down trodden and low caste people towards the correct way of life and set an example of what a spiritual leader should be in the real sense of work. A thief who had come to steal valuables at his place, by his grace, gave up stealing and began to live an honest life. Fishermen accepting his path of non violence gave up fishing and began to earn their livelihood by forming and became his followers even traders and businessmen who became his followers adopted the policy complete honesty to earn their living. Whoever came in contact with him was magnetically drawn towards him, and his teachings made them understand the higher principles in life and he could therefore persuade them to lead a more honest life full of compassion and humanity. He too, like his father accepted followers from all walks of life, be it rich or poor man or woman king or commoner. This grace and compassion was equal for every person who came to him.

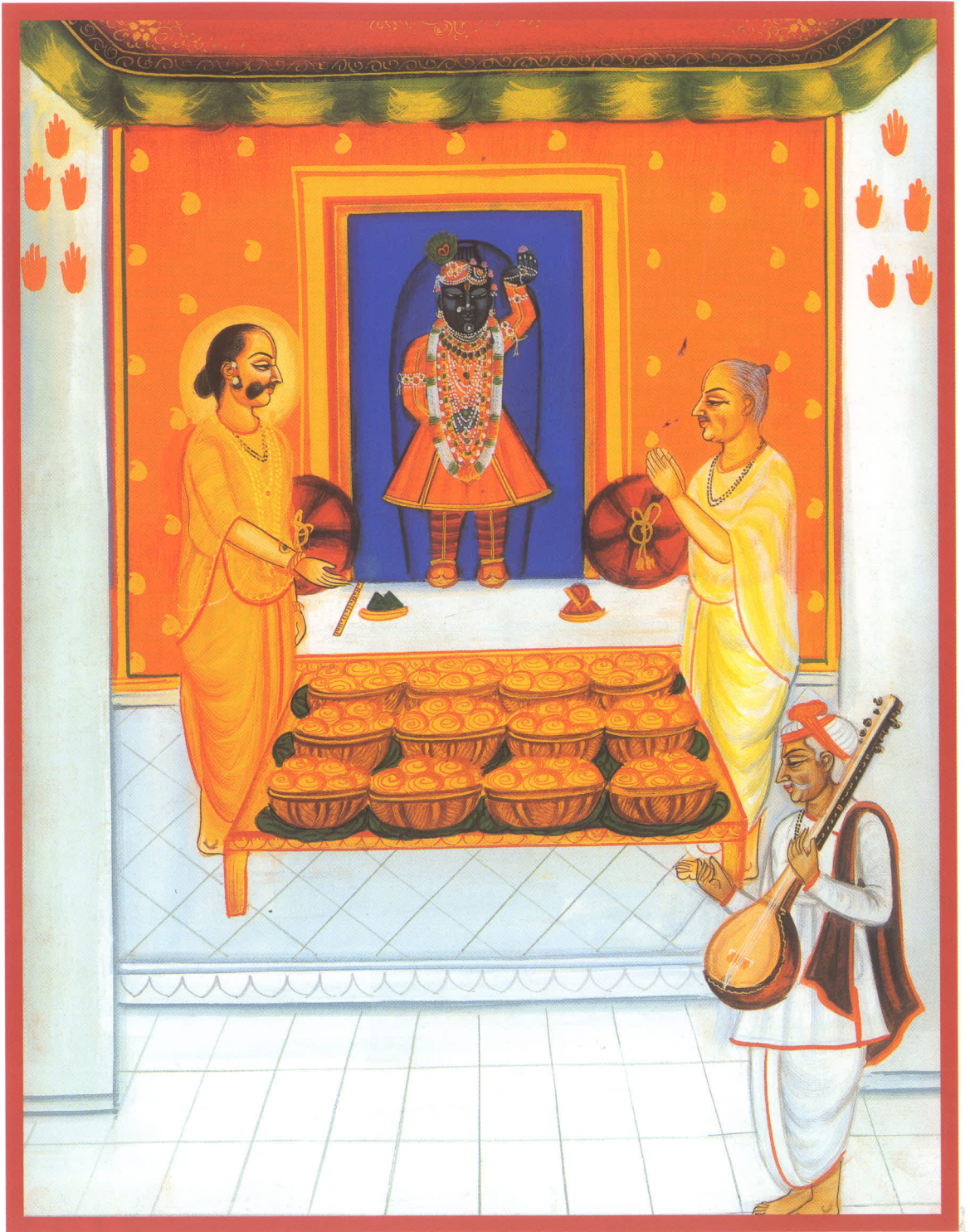
His daily routine itself would show how much effort and labour was put in by him to live the life based on the highest principles laid down by his father. It shows a life of a Sanyasi who has renounced all material pleasures and possessions for the achievements of the sublime. Though a householder, He was an ascetic. He was surrounded by the wealthy and the kingly people yet was human and simple, leading a simple life which was interwoven with pure devotion.



Taking simple Bhog of rice and dahi for
Shri Nathji

His day began before Sunrise and after finishing his daily rituals like bath etc; attended to the seva of Shri Navnitpriyji, (his personal deity of three months old Shri Krishna) after Mangal bhog and Mangala Aarti he would offer Shrinagar to the tiny Lord according to the time and season, after which he would dress and travel to the Giriraj temple on a horseback there he would offer Raajbhog to Shrinathji, after which he would himself partake a small lunch and rest a while. He would then read and recite Subodhini (commentaries on Srimad Bhagwat by Shri Vallabh) surrounded by his followers and would write and compose some literature of his own. Later, after a bath again, he would engage himself in the seva of the evening after which he would have his own supper. Late in the evenings he would be surrounded by his family make malas (garlands) for Shrinathji or stitch costumes for Him or even make new ornaments for Him. At night he would converse with his followers or preach to them the principles of devotion in Pushti Marg. His day was hectic and fast paced by his entire routine which circled around pleasing the Lord while he himself was deeply immersed in the strong devotion he had for Him. Along with this fast paced round the clock daily routine, he widely travelled to propagate Pushti Marg, and his frequent travels resulted in a steady rise in the following of Pushti Marg. He travelled to every corner of the country and preached Krishan Bhakti. It has been said that he had more than two lakh followers; wherever he went, by his debates, his preachings, his simple life style and divine character, he successfully propagated the principles of Bhakti. He too, like his divine father believed strongly in the will of God and set the standards of his life accordingly. He increased the opulence in the offerings to Shrinathji because it was his (Shrinathji's) own will that his seva be offered with total resplendence of royal paraphernalia and opulence. This was his ultimate surrender towards the Lord's will.

His undaunted devotion was the reason behind many things that he said and did in his life. Once when he was informed that Shri Krishna (in the form of Shrinathji) was playing in the forest near the Giriraj Hills in the afternoon and was suddenly feeling hungry Immediately he prepared a 'Bhog' (meal) of Dahi - rice etc. and himself went to the place where the Lord was playing and offered him the Bhog himself fed the Lord. Such his devotion for the Lord and he never deputed the seva to other people.



Shrinathji having Jalebis to celebrate the birthday of Shri Vitthalnathji

The Lord reciprocated this devotees love in a similar way. The devotion and affection with which he served the Lord pleased Him tremendously and therefore one day the Lord decided to reciprocate His devotee's love. It was Shri Vitthal's birthday and the Lord decided to celebrate it in a special way He therefore ordered the people in the temple to make lots of Jalebis (a type of sweet which were Shri Vitthal's favourite) and be offered to Him. When he saw these sweets he asked the people around as to who offered so many Jalebi's to the Lord to which they replied that it was Shrinathji Himself who had specially had them made in order to celebrate Shri Vitthal's birthday. This love of the Lord for him greatly touched Shri Vitthal, who was deeply over whelmed. To commemorate this love of the Lord for his devotee, Shri Vitthal's birth anniversary is to this day observed by Pushti Marg followers as 'Jalebi Utsav' and Jalebi's are especially offered to the Lord on this day in every Pushti Marg homes and temples.

His ability as an administrator was clear without any deceit or hypocrisy. He was gifted the area in and around Gokul by Akbar himself. Shri Vitthalnathji proved himself a man of great administrative skills and managed the land efficiently, the income of which, was used for the temple. He was greatly respected by the kings who became his followers he brought people from different social strata into Pushti Marg and lived to make it a universal religion. Hindus and Muslims lived amicably under the banner of Pushti Marg. Alikhan, Peerjadi, Ras Khan, Taj Bibi were all Muslims, who, enticed by the form of Shrinathji and attracted by the personality of Shri Vitthalnathji embraced Pushti Marg.

By his preachings and his personality he managed to unite the society, destroy the prejudices of the Hindus and Muslims and under the banner of Krishna Bhakti, united every one, thereby restoring peace to a disturbed and divided society. He patronized the spread of 'Braj' language thereby binding the society by decreasing the difference between literates and illiterates and this contribution of Shri Vitthalnathji towards literature and towards society is unique in own way.

His interpretation of Shri Vallabhacharyaji's teachings, philosophy and literature was brilliant and exactly the way Shri Vallabhacharyaji would have wanted

it to be. The Pushti Marg, as established by the father was therefore greatly staghtened by his son. In fact it was this correct interpretation of Shri Vallabh's principles and philosophy, which largely accounted for the large number of people that turning towards it. He was a philosopher and a brilliant scholar who dazzled and influnced many scholars across the country at that time. Shri Vallabh himself propagated 'Shuddhadvait Brahmavaad' as his own philosophy and a way of Hindu religion; Shri Vitthal like a true heir to every thing divine in his father, supported interpreted and propagated it in the most correct way. In fact a great part of his philosophic literature is more of the an extention and commentaries on his fathers works Like him, he never claimed to propound any philosophy different from the basic scriptures of Hindu religion. In fact, had it not been for his commentaries and interpretations, most of Shri Vallabh's work might not have been understood, or might have been misunderstood by the future generations and this is Shri Vitthal's greatest legacy to our present times.

His divine powers were very visible at various times, but these divine powers shown by him were never a vulgar show of miracles or an emphasis to be worshipped by all. Whatever power he showed, whatever miracles he performed seemed a natural aspect of his personality where he was more of compassionate human being moved by the misery of others, and every miracle he performed was ultimately to divert that suffering person towards Krishna Bhakti.

Bhailal Kothari's mute nine year old son-in-law (child marraiges were prevalent at the time) received the power of speech and became a devout Krishna Bhakt. A local resident of Braj by he name of Dharamdas was granted eyesight by his grace, another follower was cured of leprosy, but through all this he preached to them the bliss of devotion and through then the miracles, made the people true devotees of Shri Krishna. At times this divine power was invoked by some of his followers and strange miracles were often witnessed.

At one time, he surrounded by his followers, was sitting under a tree, describing some of the divine leelas of Shri Krishna. when it suddenly became cloudy and seemed like it would rain heavily. His speech had so enraptured his followers

that if disturbed by rain, they would not be able to hear more from their guru. A vaishnav follower saw the situation, and mentally commanded the cloud in the name of his divine guru not to disturb them and to everyone's surprise it rained all around except the area in which he sat surrounded by his followers, lost in the divine pastimes of Shri Krishna's childhood. This incident alone shows the divinity present in Shri Vitthal's personality. Never during his lifetime had he used these divine powers for self glorification, or selfish purposes.

Through his grace some of his followers showed in them a part of his powers, but they too, never misused these powers for vulgar display of their Guru's grace. The followers of Shri Vallabh and Shri Vitthal, in fact, every real followers of Pushti Marg believe firmly that the powers and materialistic success are but of little value as compared to the sublime bliss of pure devotion and though a lot of their followers had these powers they always concealed it from people. A pompous show of these powers was never a part of Shri Vitthal's personality. In him the powers were not an achievement of a long perseverance or Sadhna but an aspect of the divine personality that he was. Like his divine father, he had deputed his principal followers in different places to give the divine Ashtakshar (the eight syllable Mantra) to people who wanted to embrace Pushti Marg e.g. In Gurjarat-Bhailal Kothari, Naagjibhai, in Bengal Narayandas Dewan in Ujjain Krishna Bhatt, in Vraj, the eight poet devotees (Ashtachhap) Thus he deputed a little of his authority in those he graced immensely but only with the purpose of spreading Pushti Marg into every corner of India.

The most interesting aspect of Shri Vitthal's personality was perhaps his great love for art in every form. An artist himself, he was a master of a lot of artistic qualities. Himself, a keen Beena player in childhood, he grew up to be a music lover but his love was channelised towards Krishna by organising proper music into the seva of Shri Krishna who himself loves music is to be offered the best by his devotees, and Shri Vitthalnathji using all his appreciation and love and understanding of music organised the use of different raags according to the time and season into the seva routine. Great and noted musicians like Tansen often performed before Shrinathji but the Ashta Chhap* were the regular ones. So profound was his love for



Reviving the Muslim woman Kunjari with water

poetry, and literature, that he himself composed excellent verses, he encouraged poets to compose about Krishna and his divine Leelas, to glorify the love and the devotion of the Gopis and celebrate the divine love of Radha and Krishna. Agian Ashtachhap contributed greatly to the poetry in Hindi literature, lilting verses and classical melodies flowed beautifully in the temple as Shrinathji revelled greatly in them and enjoyed them.

Besides, his love for art is shown in the artistic ornamentation, dressing and opulence that surrounds his beloved Lord. The tradition of making intricately beautiful flower garlands (malas) out of seasonal fresh flowers and its offerings to Shrinathji was also started by him and he himself would make malas every evening and offer it to Shrinathji. The organising of Raaga, Bhog and Shingar and the seasonal code of Shrinathji's dressing was largely a result of the artistic temperament of Shri Vitthal. Only a person who can appreciate art and beauty can understand how it can be channelised to be put to more sublime use. He was one such lover of art who taught that everything beautiful in words, deeds and offerings should be laid down at the feet of Shri Krishna, for Shri Krishna is the supreme enjoyer of everything at its best.

But above all this, he had a compassionate personality that made him human and more easily approachable by the large number of people that followed him. He travelled extensively and interacted with people of all levels of society from a king to a commoner, everyone who came in closer contact with him could not help but love and respect him. His followers worshipped him and held him close to their heart. But it was human life that he valued above everything. It so happened once, that he was travelling towards Giriraj on horseback. On the way, he saw a Muslim woman, a poor vegetable seller lying in the middle of the road faint with heat and thirst, on seeing this, Shri Vitthal immediately ordered his servant to give water from his own pitcher and revive the woman upon which, the servant replied that it would be wrong to give water to an untouchable from the pitcher of a highly born brahmin Goswami as himself. Hearing which he explained that there was no religion above humanity and petty ideas of untouchability were of no value where human life was concerned. The poor woman was thus revived by some water from his pitcher and thanking Shri Vitthalnathji for saving her life and appreciating his grace went away.

Forever indebted to him the woman (who was a vegetable seller) always sold her vegetables honestly and to any vaishnav devotee sold it at a lesser price. This and many other incidents tell us more about the humane side of Shri Vitthalnathji. His compassion and grace were always equal for every one; be it for a high born brahmin a poor farmer. Honest vashnav devotees, if very poor were always taken care of, and were given food and shelter in the temple itself in return for whatever seva they performed. The poorest of his followers were some of the people who were richest in their devotional experiences and he greatly appreciated them and often graced them and they were the living examples of people who had experienced the love of Shri Krishna, whose spiritual lives were richer compared to the other materially rich men and this was due to the grace of their guru.

This humane side of Shri Vitthals' personality brought him closer to the hearts of the people and endeared him greatly to his followers as it pleased Shrinathji immensely, for, no where in the culture of our great country has divine love been preached at the cost and negligence of humanity. His followers too, were taught humanity, humbleness and modesty, was without these three, devotion to Shri Krishna would be as meaningless as a body without life. In fact, he often said that a real vaishnav and a real devotee could never be benefit of these important character traits. Bhakti, without these qualities would be a mere show and hypocrisy and could never please Shri Krishna.

His idea of Krishna Bhakti was not devoid of human values, and though he might have shown an opulent way of seva, he held that every person however poor could offer seva and devote himself to the Lord, as Shri Krishna (Who is himself Lakshmiapati or the husband of the Goodness of Wealth) only cared for the undivided love and attention from his devotee. To him it was the love and the feeling present during the seva which mattered more than rich offerings. Amongst the many followers graced by Shri Vittalnathji some of them were so poor that the barely had enough to survive, yet drawn by their love and devotion Shri Krishna and bestwed. His grace and divine bliss on them, and this, was the real power that their guru projected. He always believed and said that this religion was the religion of self surrender at the feet of Shri Krishna with undaunted faith and love towards Him. Every true devotee

should live life with happiness as well as misery accepted as a part of their lives for every thing happens as per the divine will of Shri Krishna only 'तथैव कृष्ण लीलेती'* He also emphasised that, too much of wealth in life if used only for selfish purpose, would surely bring destruction and the best way is to use it for achieving the sublime, and every minute, every breath of our life should be spent for the love of Shri Krishna alone. We are all under the protection and grace of the Lord and it is in Him alone that our love should flow. Every Vaishnav should therefore cherish Him in every possible way.

This is how he brought out the subtlety of the divine principles of Shri Vallabh and vividly placed it before his followers, urging them to lead a pure, simple, blissful life with the love of Shri Krishna. Shri Vitthal preached devotion and self surrender while he himself became a living example of every thing that he preached.

Chapter V

THE HOUSEHOLDER

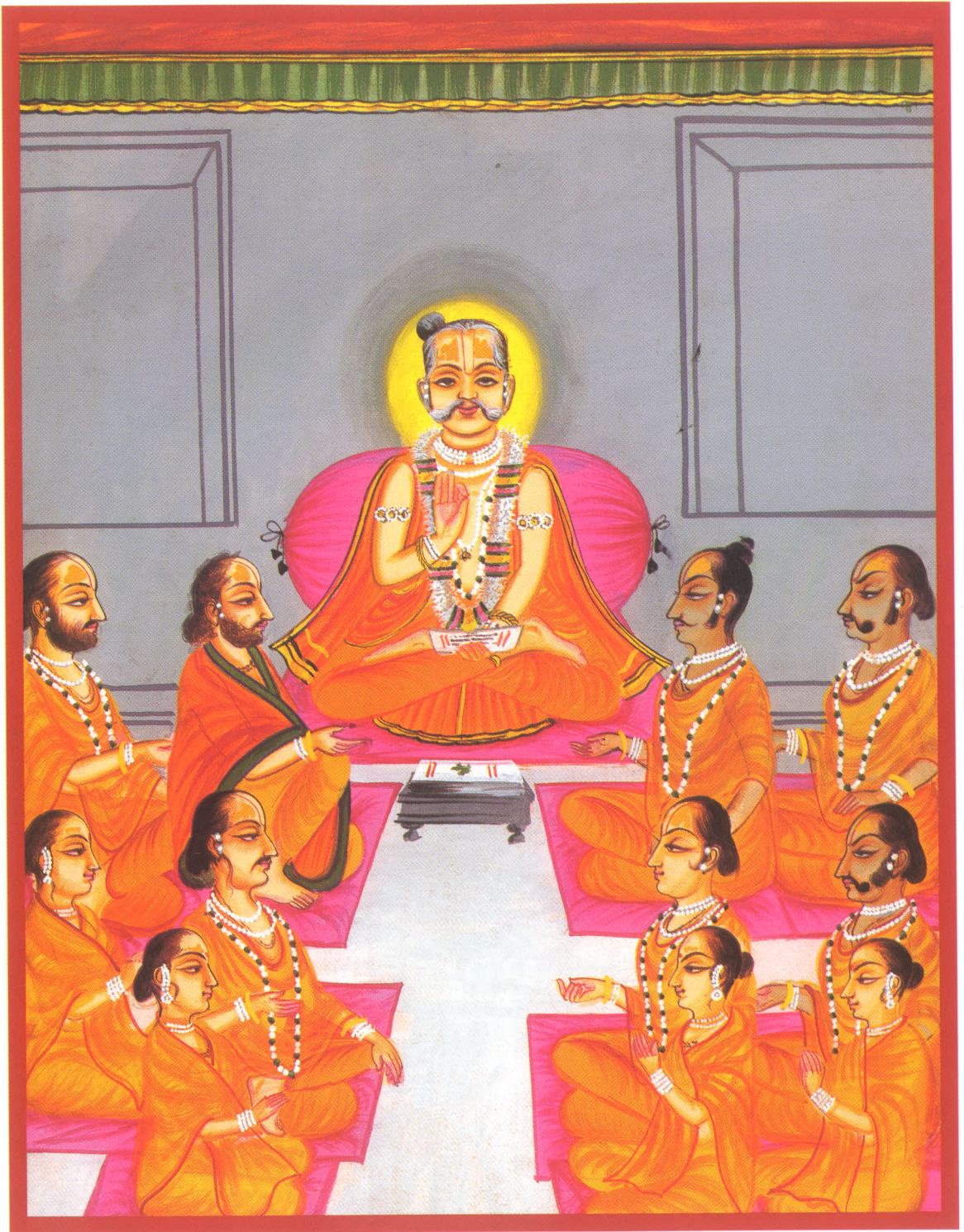
Upholding the highest principles of Vedic Dharma, meant living life to the fullest while keeping the mind totally focussed on the feet of the Lord. According to Hindu religion a householder's life is a part of person's duty towards the Lord and towards society. Shri Vallabh and thereafter his entire family lineage upheld the principles of Vedic Dharma and accepted a householder's life. Pushti Marg was itself established as a householder's religion, where to attain God, renouncing the world was not essential. In fact, Pushti Marg is a way of religion where a man can remain within the society performing his worldly duties and still attain the supreme. The Gadya Mantra (the Prosaic Mantra) requires a person to dedicate everything material and sublime at the feet of Shri Krishna. The idea is to live in the world without a feeling of possession towards its material objects. Shri Vitthanathji too, like his father and his elder brother Shri Gopinathji accepted a householder's life. In the year 1588 Shri Gopinathji arranged his wedding with Shri Rukmani the daughter of Vishwanath Batt, a Bagrodi Brahmin of Kashi. The wedding was celebrated with grand revellry and thus began his life as a householder which established a vast family with the total idea of dedicating every member to the feet of the Lord and turning everyone towards Krishan Bhakti.

His family was a huge one. He had seven sons and four daughter's and all of them great devotees of Shri Krishna. Shri Giridharji, Shri Govindji, Shri Baalkrishnaji, Shri Gokulnathji, Shri Raghunathji, Shir Yadunathji, Shri Ghanshyamji, Shri Shobha, Shri Kamla, Shri Devka and Shri Yamuna were the eleven children of Shri Vitthal and he lived to see his grand children and his great grand children also. Therefore before he left the world for his divine abode he saw a family of about sixty people all under the same roof. All of them lived under the love and protection of Shri Vitthalnathji himself and there was never one iota of difference or discord amongst them. Every person was in his own way engaged in the seva and Bhakti of the Lord.

He was an ideal father and guru to all his children and brought them up



Wedding of Shri Vitthalnathji



Teaching the principles of Pushti Marg
to his children

inculcating in them the highest principles of Shrimad Bhagwat as shown by Shri Vallabhacharyaji himself. All his children from their early childhood were taught the highest mode of seva and all of them were well versed with the Hindu Scriptures. The seeds of devotion were sown in them from their very infancy and though the religion taught to them was Krishna Bhakti, they never faltered from performing their Vedic rites which were their duties as Brahmins. All of Shri Vithal's sons have contributed towards the rich literature of Pushti Marg as all of them were learned scholars.

He despite, his great responsibilities as the propagator and leader of Pushti Marg managed to find time in his fast paced daily schedule to be with his family inculcating in every member the best values of the highest ideals of life as shown in Hindu Scriptures. Evening dinners, often saw Him sitting down with his family, engaged in discussion and discourses on various aspects of Hindu religion as well as Pushti Marg. Evenings along with the family, also meant making exquisite flower garlands and ornaments for Shrinathji. Thus every member of the family, old and young, contributed towards the seva enthusiastically, living up to the vows of total self surrender and undivided love for Shri Krishna. All seven sons, who grew up to be eminent leaders of Pushti Marg had their own rapport and relation with their illustrious father. They showed a remarkable understanding and clarity about the principles of the religion and were often consulted by their father as far as the organising of seva and literary compositions were concerned.

When Shrinathji wished for the celebration of the six seasons it was the profound knowledge of Srimad Bhagwat and other Scriptures and a deep understanding on the part of Shri Giridharji which helped Shri Vitthalnathji organise the whole celebration that genuinely pleased Shrinathji. His understanding of the principles described in Shri Subodhini (by Shri Vallabh) greatly pleased Him. His son's deep knowledge of real seva and his concern to please Shrinathji all the time, earned Shri Vitthalnathji's respect and appreciation and as a result of this he gifted him the knowledge of MRUT SANJIVNI, and by his blessings Shri Giridharji's name and fame spread far and wide in the world.

The great misery caused to Shri Raghunathji, his fifth son (who was only

four years old then) when commanded to get Shrinathji's chest of jewels, caused him to encourage and patronise the use of the local Braj language in the temple and led to the widespread use of the language in Pushti literature. Often, the discussions with his various sons and daughters led to the clear expression and explanations of the principles of Pushti Marg as intended by Shri Vallabh himself. Besides formally educating his children in the matters of religion various incidents and various occasions resulted in clear explanations of principles of Bhakti as intended by Shri Vallabhacharyaji.

Once it so happened that a grand Annakoota festival was being celebrated and Satyabhama Betiji, the daughter of Shri Gopinathji left her own seva of her personal deity at home and rushed to get the darshan of the festival. At that time, Shri Vitthalnathji met her on the way and knowing she had left her seva incomplete, reprimanded her gently, that if she was going to the temple for the darshan, then who is the one who resides in her house enjoying her seva? This was a clear way of emphasising Shri Vallabhacharyaji's principle that the form of Shrinathji in the temple and the form of Shri Krishna residing in a devotee's house were never different from each other. A Person has no other duties to be fulfilled leaving the seva of the Lord incomplete.

His fifth son Shri Raghunathji, from his very childhood had the habit of seeing his father's divine face the moment he opened his eyes in the morning. It so happened one morning that the child as per his habit was running with his eyes closed towards his father's room when he dashed against a pillar and hurt his head, the ever loving father that Shri Vitthalnathji was he was moved by this sentiment of his son and himself drew and painted his own picture and gave it to his son so that he could see his father's face the first thing in the morning.

Shri Gopinathji's daughter Shri Satyabhama too, experienced a lot of love and grace from Shri Vitthal. She was a child widow and when she grew up, in a very innocent moment asked Shri Vitthalnathji as to whom she would be married and who would be her husband. The ever compassionate Shri Vitthalnathji moved by her misery, took her to Shrinathji and placed her hand in His, saying that He was her

real Lord. He then requested Shrinathji to forever grace her and take care of her, a promise which Shrinathji forever fulfilled. Thus, at one time or the other all the children in the family experienced his grace and his love and benefitted from his guidance in every way. He never differentiated between his brother's children and his own and all of them were equal in his eyes.

The greatest unity of his family is revealed on the occasions when Shrinathji, desired to reside with his family in Mathura. It so happened that Shri Vitthalnathji was away on his 4th journey towards Gujarat, at that time, in his absence, Shrinathji expressed to Shri Giridharji his explicit wish to reside in the family residence of Shri Vitthalnathji ('Satghara') in Mathura, Shri Giridharji was overwhelmed and Shrinathji came to reside with the family in Mathura enjoying everything that every member of the family offered him with love and devotion. Every thing that the family possessed was dedicated to Shrinathji who was very pleased during His stay here. After the celebration of Holi, just before the return of Shri Vitthalnathji, Shrinathji returned to the temple of the Giriraj hills after a stay of eleven weeks. Shrinathji was pleased and gratified with Shri Giridharji and on hearing about Shri Vitthalnathji's return ordered to be taken back to the temple for, on his return, if he would not see the Lord immediately he would be very unhappy. The family was greatly blessed by Shrinathji and their devotion and love made him very happy. He appreciated and accepted every little thing that they offered him and all of them strived in every possible way to please the Lord who, out of his grace and love for Shri Vitthalnathji resided with his family and became a guest in their home.

Shri Vitthalnathji, for a greater part of his early life lived in Adel with his family, but after the death of his first wife Shri Rukmaniji and with great efforts of Shri Gokulnathji and Rani Durgavati, was married again to Shri Padmavati, the youngest daughter of Krishnadeva Duseri of Vijayanagar (Shri Ghanshyam was the son born from the second wedding).

Thereafter, for the rest of his life, he lived in Vraj, partly in Mathura and sometimes in Gokul. Queen Durgavati of Gadha had a place called Satghara constructed in Mathura and presented it to Shri Vitthalnathji. A major part of Shri Vitthalnathji's day was spent around the seva of Shrinathji and the spread of Pushti

Marg. His life, full of devotion for Shri Krishna commanded respect and reverence from people around him.

All the children and even his grand children had come to love Shri Vitthalnathji greatly. For them, he was their guru and their parent but above all a real guide to genuine devotionism that his father preached. In his life time none of his family members ever could think of living away from him it was a strong attachment bonded by the strenght of true Krishna Bhakti. Once it so happended that Keshavpuri, (A Sanyas and a Yogi) the brother of Shri Vallabhacharyaji approached Shri Vitthal and told him that, he had a lot of wealth which were gifts of his followers and had his own ashram and a lot of followers but now that, the time of his death was near he was worried as there was no heir to succeed him. As his nephew Shri Vitthalnathji or any of his family member should then take charge of his personal wealth and the wealth of his ashram and be the leader of his cult. Shri Vitthal personally did not want to give any of his sons to his uncle, he therefore said that he would consult them all and let him know about their decisions. But every member of his family down to the grandson who was five years old said that they never wanted to inherit any wealth but would just live in the care of Shri Vitthalnathji in their own home. Keshavpuri angry and frustrated, cursed the family and went away. This solidarity and love in the family was the labour of His love for his family which was nurtured by the force of devotion that had been taught to them from their very childhood and it was this bond which always kept them together.

Shri Vitthalnathji spent a long, happy life, largely dominated by the power of devotionism which was the mission and goal of his life. Once, while in the temple, Shrinathji gently commanded him to come back to his eternal abode as his worldly duties were nearly over. Respecting Shrinathji's wishes, he came home and gathered all his children and spoke to them about the Lord's wishes and that the time had come for him to distribute all his wealth amongst his children.

First he deputed the administrative responsibility and organising of the seva of Shrinathji himself to his eldest son Shri Giridharji. Shrinathji's could be offered seva as everybody's deity but the administrative responsibility was entirely to be shouldred by the eldest son. Along with Shrinathji he have Shri Giridharji the



**Before leaving for Golok Dham Shri Gusainji
summoned his children before Shrinathji**

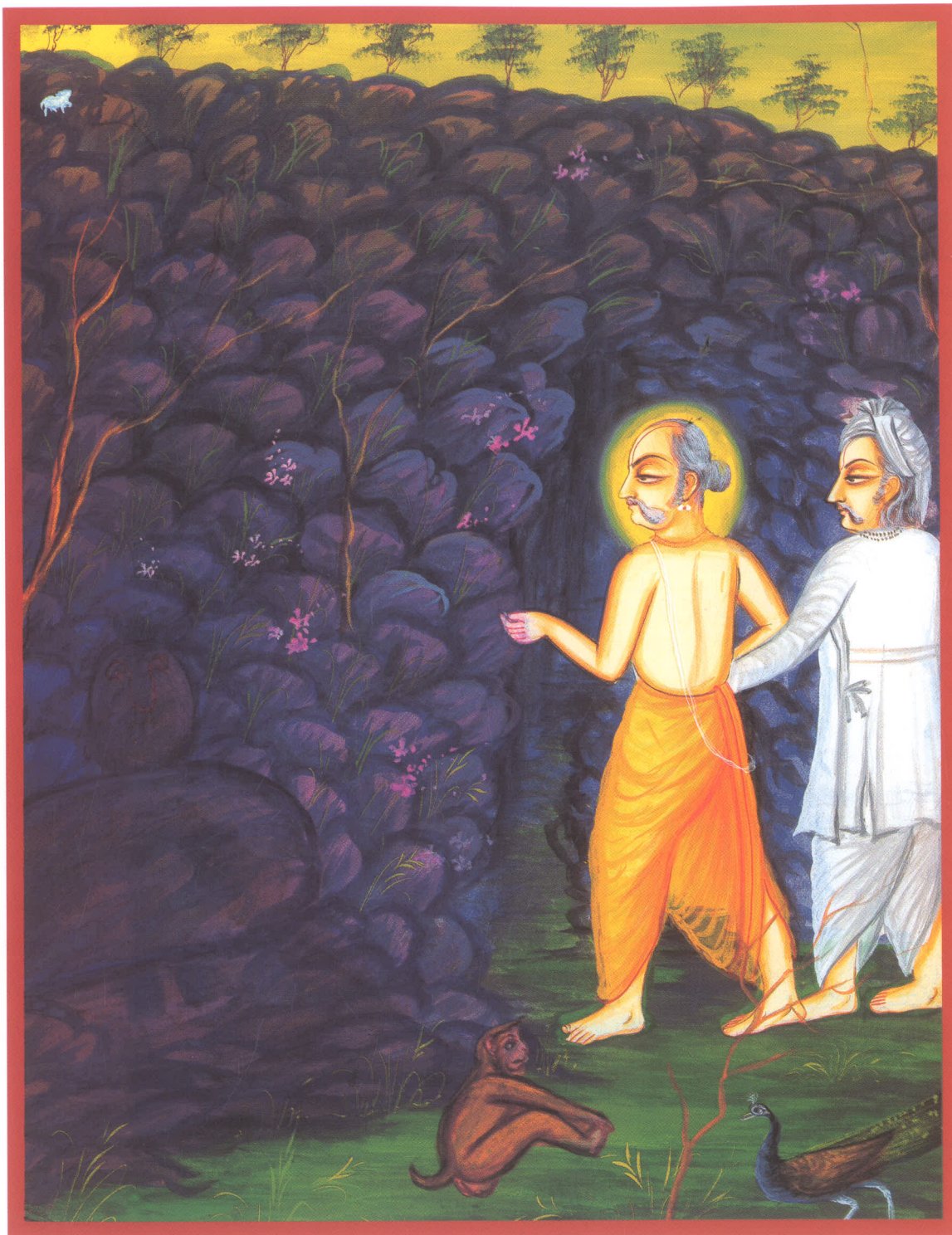
responsibility of Shri Navnitpriyaji (we get the darshan of both these swaroop in Nathdwara today) and as a first son he inherited the swarup of Shri Mathuranathji (a four armed Swurp of Shri Krishna - recently this form is in Kota in Rajasthan).

To his second son Shri Govindji he gave the form of Shri Vitthalnathji (today in a separate temple in Nathdwara) to his third son Shri Balkrishnaji he gave Shri Dwarkadheeshji (the swarup is presently in Kankroli near Nathdhwara) to his fourth son Shri Gokulnathji he gave Shri Gokulnathji (presently in Gokul). To his fifth son Shri Raghuranthji he gave Shri Gokul Chandramji (presently in Kaamvan near Gokul). To his seventh son Shri Yadunathji he gave Shri Balkrishnaji (Presently in Surat). To his seventh son Shri Ghanshyamji, he gave Shri Madan Mohanji (Presently in Kaamvan).

All these dieties had their history in the life of Shri Vallabhacharyaji himself and some of them had graced and blessed the followers of Shri Vallabhacharyaji who had worshipped them. After being with Shri Vitthalnathji, the deities were distributed amongst his sons and are till today worshipped and handed over to the future generations by heredity. They are all the different forms of Shri Krishna at different ages performing his divine Leelas in Vraj. These seven forms are truely captivating in their beauty and are in every sense of word real wealth of every Vaishnav devotee. He then took all his family members to the temple of Shrinathji and placed their hands in His to be cared by him, after Shri Vitthalnathji left the world.

This was amongst the last few earthly duties Shri Vitthalnathji performed, thereafter one fine day in 1642 after the darshan and seva of Shrinathji, respecting Shrinathji's wishes, entered the caverns of Giriraj never to come out again leaving his followers and his family to grieve deeply,. Even the last rites to be performed after his death were performed on his Uprena (his sash) as per his wishes, by his eldest son Shri Giridharji. While entering the cavern he held the hand of Govindswami¹ who joined him on his eternal journey Chaturbhujdas¹ who could never think of existing without Shri Vitthalnathji along with Chhitsuwami¹ departed soon after Shri Vitthalnathji to join him in the Lords abode. (The Golok Dham).

1. All three were among the Ashta - Chap poets.



**Entering the cavams of Shri Giriraj with
Shri Govindswami**

Thus, after seventy years of life on earth, making Pushti Marg a strong force and the seva of Shrinathji a way of life for its followers. Shri Vitthalnathji left this world to forever reside in the eternal of abode of Shri Krishna.

In seventy years a lot was achieved in all possible ways for the followers of Pushti Marg and that alone speaks a lot about his personality, his mission and his reverence to his divine father. What better legacy can one give to future generations except a strong force of faith and a sure way of life at the feet of Shri Krishna ? What better knowledge than which is explained by his commentaries on Shri Vallabh's principles? What better ideals than the ideals of devotion to Shri Krishna? These then singularly stand out as the true legacies Shri Vitthalnathji has given to us for which Vaishnavas all over the world will always feel blessed.

Chapter VI

HIS LEGACY

Shri Vitthalnathji's greatest legacy to Pushti Marg and perhaps to every Hindu is the vast amount of literature he has given. A rare combination of profound intellect, lyrical artistry and perfect knowledge he has given literature of rare beauty and a thought process which surpasses itself beyond compare.

His name 'Vitthal' itself in Sanskrit means a person who destroys ingornance in others and awakens true knowledge of the sublime, thus inspiring one towards devotionalism. In this sense of the term he was truly 'Vitthal', as through his literature and teachings, he made many people turn towards Pushti Marg and showed them the path of divine bliss. His literary pursuits worked in two ways. On the basis of Shri Subodhini, he taught the principles of Srimad Bhagwat nearly every day to his followers and others who came to hear his discourses. This happened whether he was in Vraj or elsewhere on a tour and in this way he propagated the principles of Pushti Marg.

Secondly he exposed the errors of some of the earlier scholar and created his own literature and also wrote commentaries on the works. There were various differences of opinion prevalent at that time regarding the philosophy of Shri Vallabhacharyaji and his idea of devotion. He explained and clarified all doubts and differences in his various works. Therefore, when asked by a scholar regarding the difference of Krishna Bhakti as understood in the traditional way and that according to Pushti Marg, He composed two explanations by the name of 'Bhaktihans' and 'Bhaktihetunirnay' clarifying the difference between traditional way of Krishna Bhakti and the Pushti way of Krishna Bhakti.

Ordinarily, according to Hindu tradition a person writing a commentary combining the principle of Vedas, Gita and Brahmasutra to explain any principle of Hindu Scripture would be regarded as a Acharya or a Scholar. The contemporaries of Shri Vallabhacharyaji Shri Shankaracharyaji, Shri Madhavacharyaji etc were all Acharyas.

Shri Vallabhacharya, too wrote commentaries, but added the opinion of Srimad Bhagwat to it, raising its importance to the level of Vedas and was therefore an Acharya. However his commentaries were left incomplete and Shri Vitthalnathji who had truly inherited everything divine from his father completed it, giving it the name of Anubhasya and therefore he too, is regarded on the level with his father. While all his other works contain his name in them 'Anubhasya' does not do so. His style of writing was clear, scholarly and yet full of lyrical beauty while the style of his father was simple serious and brief. Therefore while Shri Vallabhacharyaji sowed the seeds of his philosophy of Shudhadwait Brahmavaad in his literature, it was the son who nurtured the seeds and raised it to be a beautiful tree giving the fruits of knowledge and Bhakti to whoever read it.

But being just a great scholar was not enough. He was an ardent lover of Shri Krishna and this love inspired in his heart, literature pertaining to the divine beauty and leelas of Shri Krishna. His works therefore, had this rare combination of philosophy and poetry making it beautiful beyond compare. He was therefore not just a philosopher guru, but a poet who penned the divine beauty of Shri Krishna's form in verses and words which were so surpassingly sublime and beautifully divine.

In all, he must have written some fifty different compositions which vividly bring out the philosopher and the poet in him to the forefront. In fact, sometimes it is a philosopher who is talking about Krishna Bhakti, while at others, it is a Krishna Bhakt talking philosophy. But he is at his best when he is writing out of pure love for Shri Krishna. Every word when inspired by that ardent love for Shri Krishna, reveals his heart and soul which existed only for the strong love he felt for the Lord.

His works therefore, can be categorized according to their content.

I) His Commentaries e.g. The last 1½ chapters of Anubhashya, Gayatri Karika, Ahstakshar Nirupan, Premanmrut Stotra, Gadyarth. The first Part of Geet Govind and his commentaries on Madhurashtak. Commentaries (Tika) on some of the 'Shodash Granth' by Shri Vallabhacharyaji.

II) His own independent work. The most important being Vidvanmandan

explaining the principles of the Shuddhavaith philosophy as propagated by Shri Vallabhacharyaji explaining the presence of God in every atom of his creation and the possibility of achieving divine bliss through devotion. This piece of work by Shri Vitthal shows him to be the real philosopher that he was then Bhakti Hans and Bhaktihetu Nirnay, explaining the meaning and real form of devotion, proving in to be higher than Karma and Gnana. It expresses the view that devotion to God should be with full knowledge of his power and presence everywhere. Then his very important work Shringarras Mandan which describes the divine raas leelas of Shri Krishna as every devotee of Shri Krishna should know that Shri Krishna alone is the Supreme enjoyer of the essence of every thing beautiful, this work is in a lyrical form and is written with the idea of revealing the true form of Shri Krishna in order to attract his devotees towards him.

Then come his works like Swapna Darshan, Guptras, Janmastami, Ramanavmi Nirnay, Chatushloki.

III) Then we find his beautiful stotras or hymns praising the form and grace of Shri Krishna and his prayers to him.

1) Shri Gokulashtak, Swaminiashtak, Swamini Stotra, Bhujang Prayatashtak, Lalit Tribhang, Prabodh, Prenkhparyank Shayanm, Mangal Mangalm, Bhaavairankuritam, Aarya, Vignapti, Shri Yamunashtapadi and Rakshasmaran.

IV) He written beautiful compositions revealing the real form of Shri Vallabh his divine father these include Shri Sarovattam Stotra, Shri Vallabhastak and Shri Sfuratkrishna Premamrut.

V) He has also written commentaries on Shodash Granth. The Sixteen main works of Shri Vallabhacharyaji among them he has written commentaries on Siddhant Muktaivali, Navratna, Siddhant Rahasya and Shri Yamunashtak.

VI) His commentaries on the Bhagwat are written as Nibandh Prakash, Tippaniji and VritrasurChatushloki.

VII) Besides, he has created separate literature on Shrimad Bhagwat Gita in his works Gita Tatparya Nyasadesh Vivruti, Gitahetu and commentaries on the 1st chapter

Shri Vitthal was especially attracted towards the musical element present in the Geet Goving of Jaidev and therefore he enjoyed doing the commentaries of the first part of it but his best were Vidvanmandan and Shringarras Mandan. They have successfully attracted devotees and scholars by the sheer beauty of their form and true devotees have been inspired to achieve the sublime. All his literature has been in Sanskrit which officially the language of the Acharyas and scholar of Hindu religion but Shri Vitthalnathji has greatly contributed towards the growth and flourishing of Braj. After Shrinathji's orders, it was officially made the language of the temple and great literature from great poets like the Asthachrap was given, while Shri Vitthalnathji himself being a great poet composed beautiful, Kirtans and poetry in this language. He wrote under the pen name of 'Sahaj Priti' and 'Lalita' and they are exquisite lyrics dedicated to the beautiful form and divine leedas of Shri Krishna. It is greatly due to Shri Vitthalnathji's love for poetry that Pushti Marg has a rich legacy of Kirlonas which are truly exquisite and beautiful and truly celebrate the fascinating from of Shri Krishna as he lived in Vraj.

It is mainly due to the elaborate literary efforts of Shri Vitthalnathji that we have today detailed explanations and expressions of every intricate detail of the principles of Pushti Marg. Shri Vallabhacharyaji laid down these principles when he founded Pushti Marg, but it was Shri Vitthalnathji's tireless work, and efforts which explained them in their true form and revealed to us the true meaning of every thing that Shri Vallabhacharyaji had ever said.

SHRI KRISHNAPANAMASTU



Shri Nikunjalata betiji

Shri Nikunjalata betiji is the grand daughter of Nitya Leelastha (Late) Shashthapithadhishwar H. H. Goswami Shri Brijratnalalji Maharaj of Surat (Gujrat) the direct decendant (the 14th Generation) of Shri Vallabhacharya and she is daughter of H. H. Goswami Shri Madhusudanlalji Maharaj. She married Late Shri (Sharmaji) Sunderraj Neralla, the son of Late Dr. Neelkant Neralla.

She has widely travelled in India & all over the world to propagate the Pustimarg. She is the founder of Shri Gusainji charitable Trust which is specially founded for the charitable work in various fields like medical & educational aid for needy, irrespective of cast & creed also for the spread of Pushtimarg & various activities connected to it.